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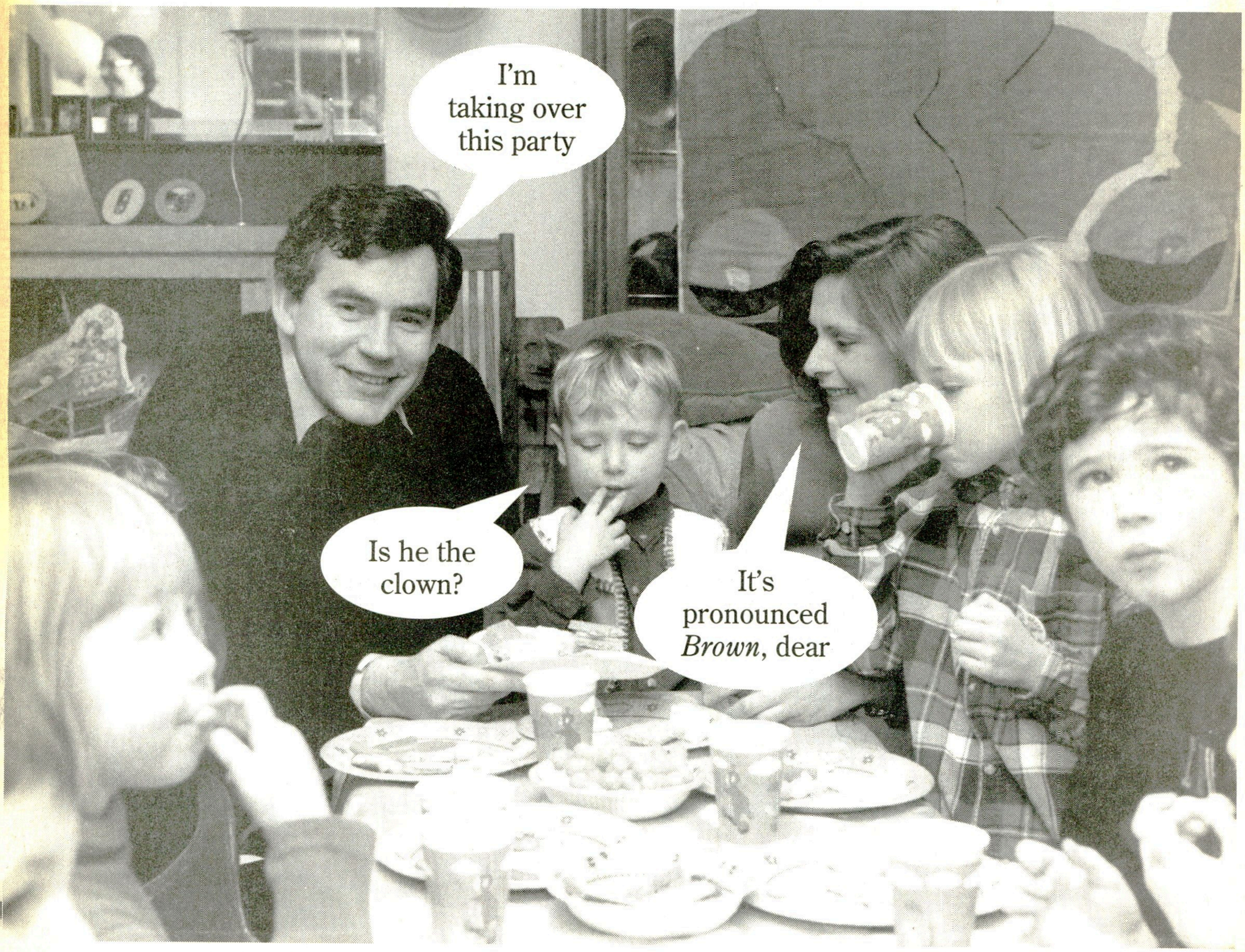

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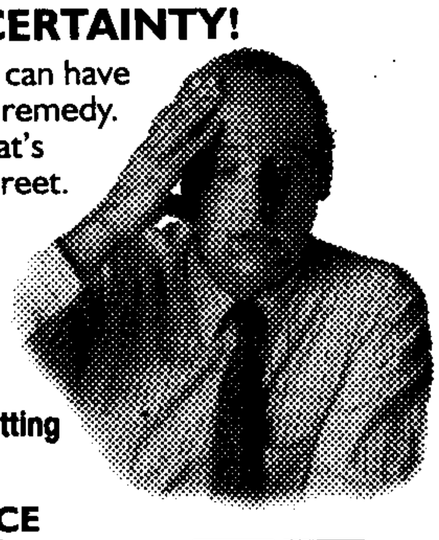

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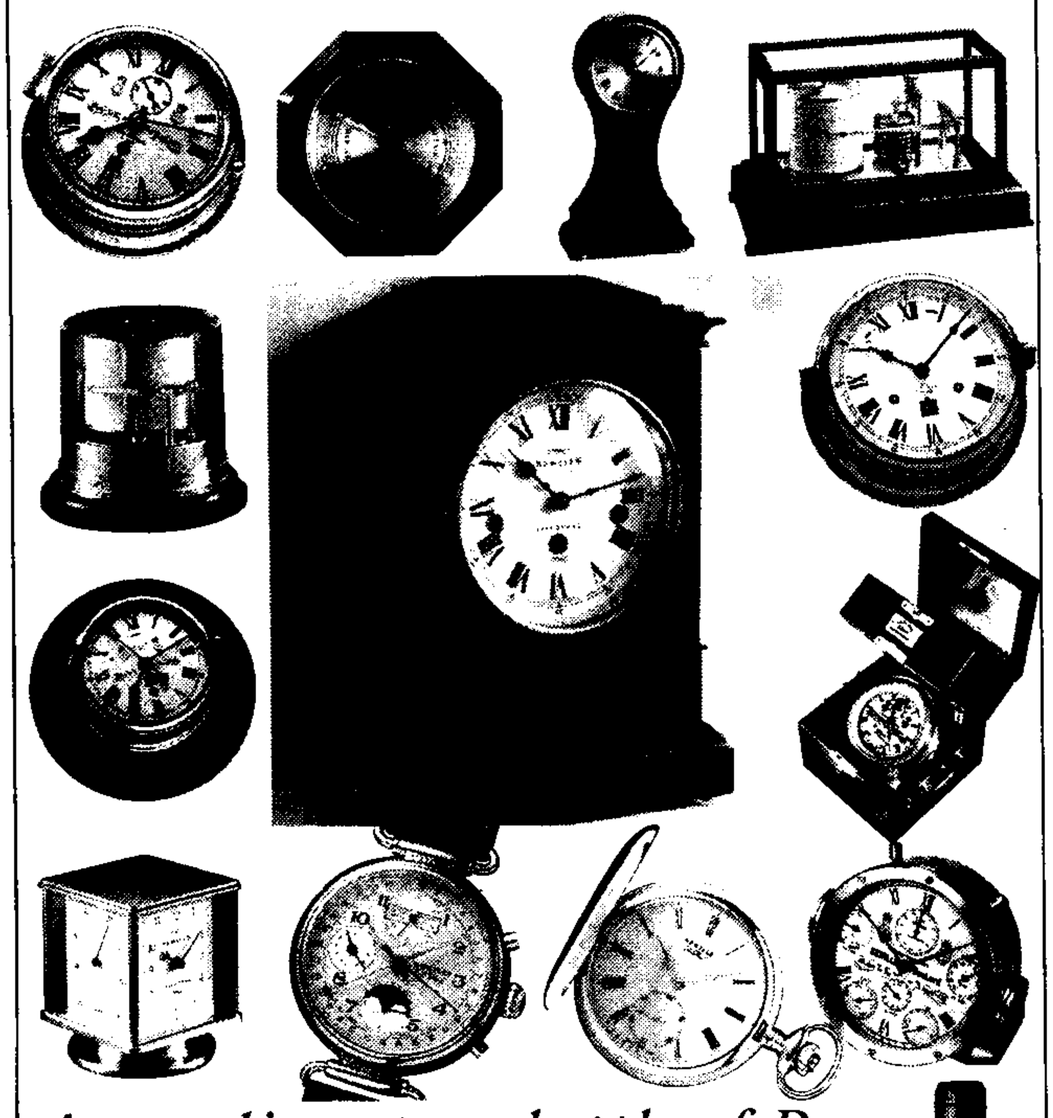

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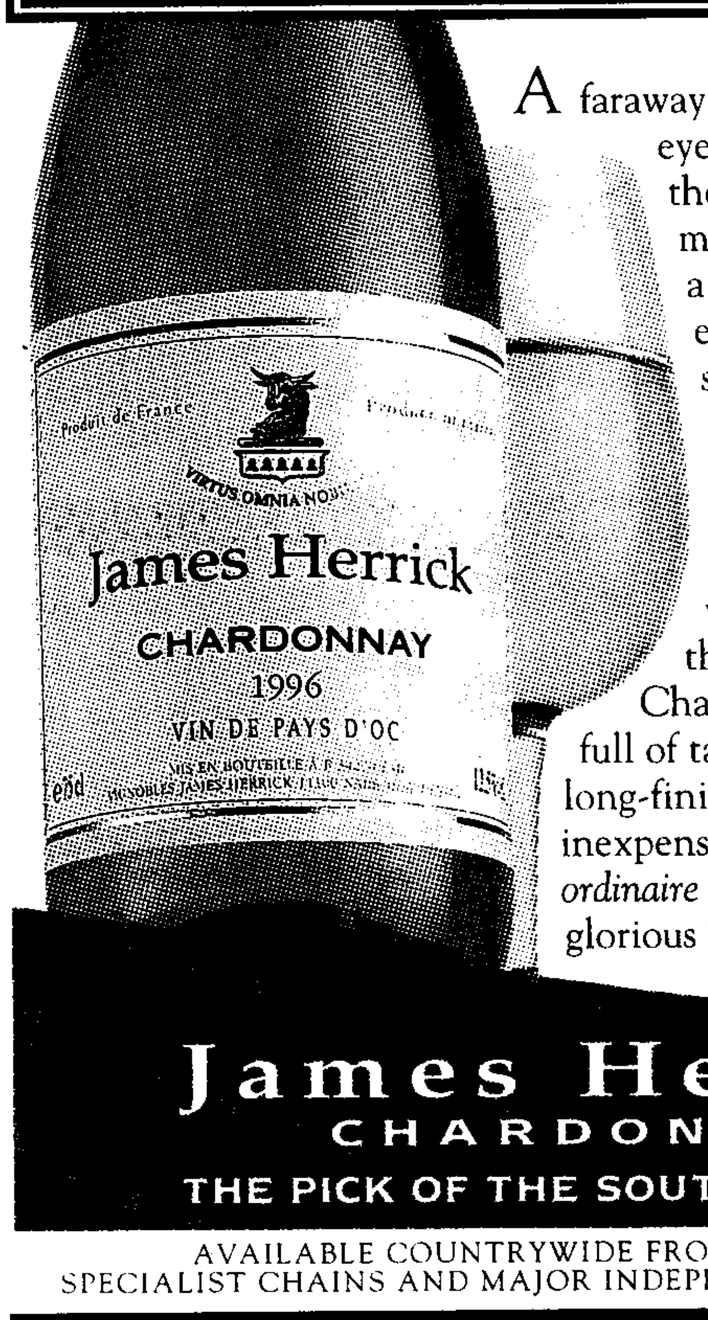

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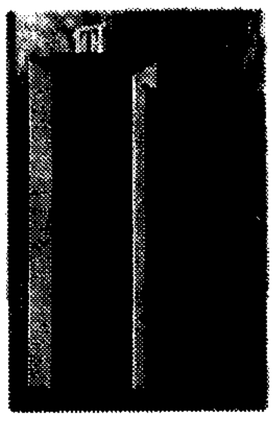

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This compares starkly with the performance of our nearest broadsheet tabloid rivals, The Daily Times and Mailograph, who recorded a disappointing 98.3 million readers, continuing their downward trend despite a price cut on Thursdays and a huge giveaway discount promotion to ABC readers under 90 living in Essex.

This conclusively proves absolutely nothing at all, but it fills in a lot of space on a bad newsday and seems to fool the advertisers. *(Shome mishtake surely? E. Strobes.)*

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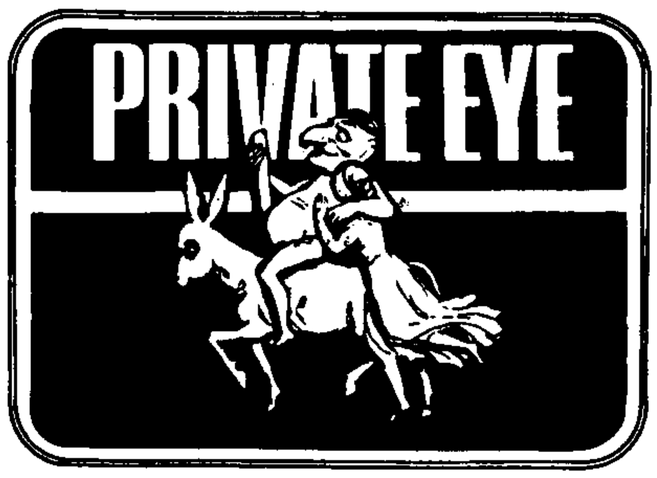


COLOUR SECTION

THE adjournment of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry on the day it opened was caused by the doubts of the Lawrence family about the chairman of the inquiry, Sir William Macpherson, and the counsel to the inquiry, Edmund Lawson QC.

The family asked for an adjournment to lobby home secretary Jack Straw for a replacement for Sir William. Their worries stem from Sir William's record in judicial review in immigration cases, as set out in the *Eye* last October (936), and on Mr Lawson's past connections with the Police Federation (*Eye* 944). The judge's record was examined in the *Observer* on 15 March.

As he adjourned the case, Sir William described the *Observer* article as "wholly false". One of the *Observer*'s points was a direct quote from Sir William, and another (a case which could not be heard because Sir William, the judge, had gone to Ascot) was published without complaint in the *Daily Mirror* on 22 June 1990.

● *More Footnotes 26, 27*

THE lord chancellor Lord Irvine has appointed His Honour Judge Hubert Dunn as the new chief immigration adjudicator — even though, as we reported in the last *Eye*, Dunn has little experience of immigration and was apparently ineligible for the job since he had never been an ordinary adjudicator.

The choice, we suggested, was inexplicable to everyone except Lord Irvine himself and the two men on his appointments panel — Robin Holmes, from the lord chancellor's department, and Mr Justice Keene.

Can this, a reader asks, be the same Mr Justice Keene who, as an old friend of the Blairs, lent Tony and Cherie his French chateau for their summer holiday last year? And who, a mere fortnight after the holiday, granted Blair's government an injunction preventing the *Mail on Sunday* from reporting allegations by MI5 whistleblower David Shayler?

None other. Small world, eh?

● *More Legal News 14*

Among those debating the issue of under-age sex with Joan Bakewell are Germaine Greer, Peter Tatchell and Mandy Smith. *Grauniad Guide*

WE nearly went to war with Iraq because of Saddam Hussein's secrecy about his nuclear and chemical-biological arsenal, but when it comes to the embarrassing question — who made the arsenal and sold it to Iraq? — the British government's official policy is total secrecy.

On 16 February Llew Smith, Labour MP for Blaenau Gwent, asked how much of the equipment found by United Nations inspectors in Iraq had been made in Britain and who were the manufacturers. The answer was that it is "not the policy" to disclose such matters.

Asked why, Tony Lloyd, a junior minister who is finding out faster than most how to sound exactly like his Tory predecessors, said: "It is not our practice to reveal the identity of British manufacturers whose equipment has been found by UNSCOM in Iraq, because it is UNSCOM's practice to disclose such information to governments on a confidential basis..." (Hansard, 25 February). The UN knows, the government knows... but we can't.

● *More HP Sauce 8*

JUST FANCY THAT!

"It is indeed sad that those who did this vile crime [the murder of Stephen Lawrence] have escaped justice. However, far from being, as some have suggested, an indictment of the British justice system, it is an example of its stern impartiality in sifting evidence."

— Editorial in *Financial Times*, 28 February 1997.

"The Police Complaints Authority has recommended a senior officer involved in the Stephen Lawrence murder inquiry face a neglect of duty charge, Scotland Yard said last night."

— *Financial Times*, 14 March 1998.

ALISTAIR Campbell accused the BBC of being "dumbed down" when he raged about its criticism of the government; and Jack Straw was worried that middle class men were "dumbing themselves down" like characters from *Men Behaving Badly*. Perhaps these guardians of the nation's intellect should have a word with culture secretary Chris Smith.

In the run up to the election he had a research assistant and all his computers paid for by Planet 24, the television production company behind such cerebral programmes as *The Word* and *The Big Breakfast*.

● *More Media News 10*

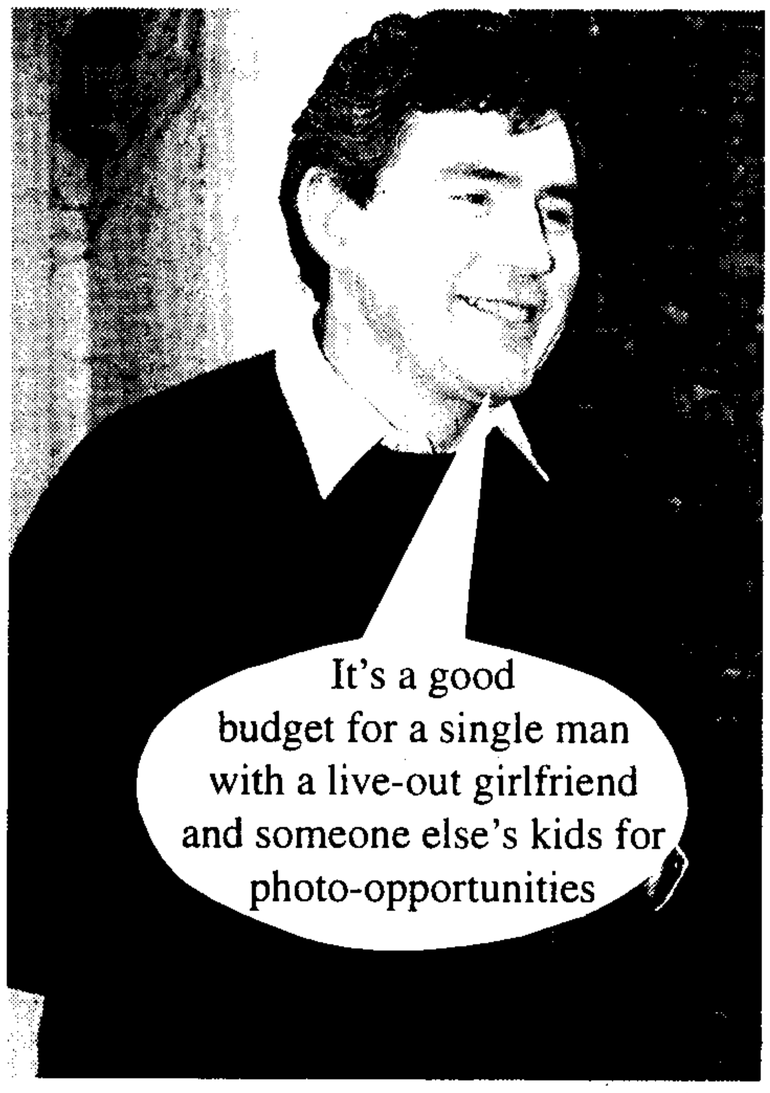
"EARL trades too much on Diana's memory," thundered the *Voice of the Mirror* on 9 March. "No one is now exploiting Diana as much as her brother Charles."

Er, no one? A quick glance at recent *Mirror* front pages would seem to suggest otherwise...

From Saturday 28 February to Tuesday 10 March the name of the late princess featured on *nine* front pages in nine days — a remarkable hit rate and one seldom (if ever) achieved even during her lifetime.

● *More Street of Shame 6*

● *Plus Lottery Special 11*



Street of Shame

JOHN Prescott's latest rant is against the *Sunday Times* for planting an undercover reporter in his local Hull Labour party — yet the *Sunset Times* never even got round to printing the story.

Editor John Witherow sent his unfortunate West Country reporter Simon Trump to Hull for three days a week over a year. The story never appeared because the research only yielded a weak story about election expenses and plenty of unsubstantiated rumour.

Witherow thought the story wasn't strong enough to justify the subversive tactics used and dropped it... until the other papers got hold of it last Sunday when Witherow feebly ran it as an add-on to another story.

THE *Sunday Times* business section is maintaining its fine tradition of not letting the facts stand in the way of a PR puff.

The subject of its "My First Break" feature on 8 March was 22-year-old Justin Etzin, who was said to have built an empire turning over almost £1m a year.

"He founded Capital VIP, a business organising events, four years ago," reported starry-eyed *ST* hack Rupert Steiner. "Clients include Gucci, BT, Harrods and Coca-Cola." Capital VIP had made a profit of £230,000 last year on sales of £700,000, and Etzin was "looking to float part of the business at the end of next year".

Really? Anyone tempted to invest by the *Sunday Times* eulogy should first do a quick check at Companies House — where they will learn that Capital VIP Group Ltd (director: Daniel Justin Etzin) was voluntarily wound up in September last year with debts of £131,490. The largest creditor was, er, Coca-Cola.

SCOTLAND's Labour grandees will be worried to hear of political developments at the Mirror Group.

New boss Kelvin MacKenzie is on the verge of shifting the loyalties of the Scottish edition of the *Mirror* from Labour to the SNP, thus leaving the *Record* as one of the few Labour-supporting papers north of the border.

Since both papers share the same office, managers have hit upon the original and expensive idea of putting up partitions.

"THE *Financial Times* no longer has a media section," Maggie Brown noted on the *Times* media page last week. But then the *FT*'s media section had never been much cop anyway, she added, "partly because its expert media journalists were never deeply involved in running the space".

Would she by any chance be referring to Raymond "Ploddy" Snoddy, who recently defected from the *FT* to the *Times* and promptly hired la Brown to write a weekly column?

MEANWHILE, many readers have asked if Raymond Snoddy, the *Times* media editor who so dismally failed to cover the Murdoch versus Patten story, is the same Raymond Snoddy who used to present Channel 4's *Hard News*, which specialised in exposing cant, censorship and corruption in the Street of Shame.

In spite of the identical names, it seems highly unlikely that the two men could be in any way related.

CONTRARY to royal hacks' fears that the goose that laid their golden egg had died with Di in the Pont D'Alma tunnel, the princess has proved as good a source of stories dead as she ever was alive.

There ought to be enough tales and angles to go round, but hacks are whingeing that the appalling Nigel Pratt-Dumpster of the *Daily Mail* seems to be getting a lot of Di-related "exclusives" for one so useless.

Needless to say this is not as a result of any investigative triumphs on Dumpster's part. His deputy Adam Hellicar, however, is enterprisingly squiring one Vanessa Corringham, the press officer seconded from Lowe Bell Communications to the Diana memorial fund. Suggestions that la Corringham may be confusing her professional and romantic lives, and giving Hellicar an unfair start on Di stories, are merely the mean-minded carpings of jealous rivals, however.

THE Mirror Group-owned *Belfast News Letter* is David Montgomery's chance to impress the folks back home. And when two friends, one Catholic, one Protestant, were shot dead in the village of Poyntzpass, the *News Letter* ran a front page editorial condemning a "day of shame for the media".

According to the MGN rag, newspapers' "at times outrageous behaviour led to pleas from the victims' families to be left to mourn in peace". Coming from any Mirror Group paper this was hard to stomach, but the *News Letter* was hardly in a position to preach. A large front page news story accompanied the editorial, at the bottom of which readers were surprised to read "The Horror of Poyntzpass. See Pages 6, 8, 9, 10 & 11".

ADMIRERS of the *Sun*'s TV campaign to win up-market readers are surprised to see former England manager Graham Taylor lovingly pouring over the paper, obviously enjoying its contents.

Surely this cannot be the same Graham Taylor whose expletive riddled rants about the super, soaraway *Sun* when it campaigned for "Turnip Taylor" to "Go Now!" remain one of the most memorable elements of World Cup 90? What a difference an enormous cheque makes!

"I AM probably alone in holding this opinion," the cartoonist Martin Rowson writes in *Tribune*, "but I have a large amount of sympathy for the current plight of the lord chancellor, Lord Irvine."

He neglects, however, to mention one other way in which he is "probably alone": the permanent secretary to the lord chancellor, Sir Thomas Legg, is Rowson's father-in-law.

***FINANCIAL Times* supremo Stephen "Slasher" Hill has come up with another brilliant wheeze to "internationalise" the pink 'un as a "World Business Newspaper": he is to close the international subscriptions and distribution department in Frankfurt.**

Shome mishtake, shurely?

NO feature in the *Daily Telegraph* has a more loyal following than the cryptic crossword. It is set by six compilers, one for each day, all of whom receive regular fan mail.

At the beginning of February, however, they had a rather less welcome letter from Val Gilbert, the paper's crossword editor, informing them that they are effectively sacked from 30 March since the puzzles will henceforth be "computer-generated".

La Gilbert's plan is to use a computer programme to fill the grids with words. Clues will then be provided from her database of 42,000 clues from previous *Torygraph* crosswords. These, by definition, will all be *déjà vu* — and, as a mish-mash of about 12 different setters' styles, will have no recognisable coherence.

The problems of using computers were set out in a recent article by one of the *Times*'s crossword editors, Mike Laws. "Available software can fill a grid in a trice," he noted, "but the results are usually boring, because the machine doesn't opt for clueability or interest of vocabulary."

Why, then, is Val Gilbert hellbent on wrecking the *Telegraph* puzzle? In her "sacking letter", she claimed the new system was necessary "because of the cost savings involved". But when the setters offered recently to take a 30 percent pay-cut from £140 to £100, Gilbert replied that "cost is not an issue... there are other ramifications I cannot go into".

Cost may not be an issue to her, but it matters to the compilers — and to the *Telegraph*. Last August, without consulting the setters, she ran her virtual-reality puzzles for a month. Who was paid the £140 a day? And who will be paid the £140 a day for the second-rate, second-hand puzzles?

Gilbert began as a crossword editor, then took over the competitions for the *Telegraph* and finally formed her own company. Does her new company have the copyright for old *Telegraph* crosswords, allowing her to extract individual clues?

Does the *Telegraph*'s sternly moralistic editor, Charles Moore, know of Gilbert's antics? If so, does he think it ethical to plagiarise his own contributors' work like this?

NIGEL Pratt-Dumpster's normally high standards of reporting were on display in his recent "South Africa Diary" which featured the frightfully important wedding of former Lloyd's name Rupert "Muffin" Wragg and interior designer Leslé Lombard, known to her many friends in Cape Town as, er, "Let's Lay".

Dumpster divulged that Dai Llewellyn had to stand in for the best man, who had "fallen ill before dinner". Shortage of space no doubt prevented Dumpster from revealing that the ailing best man was Sir William Piggott-Brown, with whom Dumpster himself was staying in the Cape Town suburb of Clifden. Piggott-Brown's indisposition was not unrelated to having spent several days in Dumpster's convivial company prior to the wedding. After spending a night in hospital he was advised by doctors to steer clear of booze. One glass of bubbly at the wedding duly caused him to break into a cold sweat, whereupon he had to be taken home.

Dumpster wrote that stand-in best man Llewellyn had referred to "arcane public school practices" in his speech. This actually consisted of lurid details of buggery which deeply shocked the bride's family, up from provincial Port Elizabeth. They are still recovering from Dai's joke that the lovely Leslé "might not know which way to turn". What a charming world Dumpster inhabits!

JUST FANCY THAT!

LORD Archer likes nothing better than to play auctioneer at charity events, but at a recent cricket memorabilia sale for charity there was one dull piece of cricket trivia even he could not shift.

Gamely, Archer generously offered to buy the piece himself for £200 — a gesture that was cheered by the assembled crowd. Alas, the fundraisers are still waiting for Lord Archer's cheque. Presumably it is in the post.

POT-POURRI

TONY O'REILLY would not, it was stated when he bought the *Independent*, be telling fearless editors Rosie Boycott and Andrew Marr what to do. Quite true. He gets his sidekick, new *O'Dependent* managing director Brendan Hopkins, to give the orders for him.

Hopkins has told Pendragon Films, the Channel 4 fly-on-the-wall camera team that had been trailing Boycott for the past month (see *Eye* 945), to get lost. Not surprisingly, Pendragon has taken umbrage; and it seems it already has enough footage in the can for a one-hour documentary which will make the *Indie* look very silly indeed.

Hacks are now wondering how long another brilliant Boycott wheeze, the cannabis campaign, can last. O'Reilly takes a dim view of drugs and is thought unlikely to join Boycott and her pal Howard "Mr Nice" Marks at the head of the *Sindie*'s planned potheads' demo through London on 28 March — if, indeed, he allows it to go ahead at all.

Wednesday — Bob Markham will talk on Elephant Hunting In Ipswich during a lunchtime talk

Essex County Standard

● Meanwhile David "Rommel" Montgomery's preposterous Academy of Excellence has already been quietly scrapped. But it was clearly a worthwhile exercise while it lasted.

After a year of inculcating much-needed excellence into its staff, the *Indescribablyboring* came up trumps in the British Press Awards. For the first time in its 11 years of existence, the *Indie*'s writers proved incapable of being shortlisted for, never mind winning, any award whatsoever.

Honour was saved, however, by the British Guild of Picture Editors, who generously gave the *Indie* a gong for "excellent" use of photographs. Arriving at the ceremony to receive the prize on behalf of Andrew Marr — who had accidentally been sacked before he could collect it — Rosie Boycott was introduced to Deborah Orr of the *Grauniad* Weekend section, another award-winner. La Boycott extended her hand in greeting only to be told "Fuck off and die, you fucking, lying bitch!"

Alas! Pot-loving Rosie had apparently forgotten her cavalier treatment of Orr's boyfriend Will Self, who was sacked from the *Observer* for misbehaving in the prime minister's plane during the general election. After Self's sacking, Rosie rang him to commiserate and offer him a job on the *Sindie*. A meeting took place at the inevitable Groucho Club, with Self accompanied by Orr and Boycott escorted by her faithful hound Chris Blackhurst.

La Boycott said she would send him a contract forthwith, then invited him to tell her the full story of his scandalous behaviour. Self duly obliged, and Boycott suggested he should make it the subject of his first column. He said no. La Boycott, though disappointed, said she understood perfectly and again promised to send him a contract.

The following edition of the *Sindie* then carried a front-page "my drugs hell" story, quoting freely from Self's account. The promised contract for a column, however, never materialised. Hence Deborah Orr's undying hatred for Rosie the Riveter.

After her fracas with Orr at the awards ceremony, Boycott stepped up to the stage to collect the *Indie*'s prize. It was presented by Tony Blair, but Rosie, who must have inhaled the aroma of the cannabis plant in her office mightily that day, clearly thought she was at some showbiz awards ceremony. "Thank you, darling!" she gushed at the startled prime minister, before leaping forward and kissing him on both cheeks — much to the visible annoyance of the fragrant Cherie.

● Back in the office Anne McElvoy, the rightwing hackette hired by Rosie Boycott for the *Independent*, seems to have financial problems.This is curious as both she and her husband Martin Ivens, deputy editor of the *Times*, are highly paid in hack terms. McElvoy's sob story emerged when Boycott told her she shouldn't still be writing a column for the *Express* now that she was an *Indie* staffer. "But I need my *Express* column," McElvoy wailed. "It's my frock money."

If so, McElvoy's annual expenditure on frocks is in the region of £35,000.

HACKWATCH

Stewart Steven

AS a reporter on the *Express* many years ago, Stewart Steven scooped the world by "finding" Martin Bormann in South America. Unfortunately, the man in question turned out to be a blameless Argentine schoolteacher.

At the *Daily Mail* in the 1970s, he had another great exclusive, about a "secret British Leyland slush fund". Unfortunately, the documents he used were crude forgeries and the *Mail* had to shell out £100,000 in damages. More recently, as editor of the London *Evening Standard*, he ran an article by former MP Bryan Gould attacking the Labour party. Unfortunately, the piece had in fact been written by the teenage son of Michael Howard.

Did he eat humble pie? Certainly not: Steven prefers to stick to the a la carte menu at Le Gavroche, preferably in the company of a "senior cabinet minister". And now that he is turning out a column for the *Mail on Sunday*, he can indulge his favourite hobbies — table-hopping and name-dropping — with a shameless glee that makes Michael Winner look like a shrinking violet...

27 July 1997: "I have written on these pages before that I am one of the few people around who can lay claim to having spoken to every British Prime Minister since the war." (A slightly misleading claim, it transpires. His one conversation with Clement Attlee went thus: "Would you be so kind as to sign a copy of your book?" "No.") To keep up his unbroken record, he has been round to see Tony Blair. "Last week the two of us sat alone for perhaps an hour or so on a small verandah that leads from the cabinet room to the surprisingly big garden at the back of Number 10. The sun was shining and we shared a cooling beer." Fascinating!

10 August: With the Middle East back in the headlines, Steven treats us to his unique insight. "I have met Benjamin Netanyahu only twice — once, the two of us breakfasted at the Ritz in London, of all places. I didn't terribly take to him." Quite right too: any prime minister who won't allow Steven a proper lunch — or at least a cooling beer — must expect no mercy.

17 August: "When I sat at an Oxford High Table some time in the Seventies," Steven reveals, "I heard a fascinating discussion about the early church." But where are the highbrows now? "Last year my wife and I attended a small dinner party in London to celebrate the appearance on the stage of the Royal Opera House of Luciano Pavarotti. There were about 20 of us around the table so it was a pretty intimate gathering." Instead of discussing the early church, however, Pavarotti wanted to talk about football. "What is going on?" Steven wails.

26 October: "About two or three months before the general election, Gordon Brown and I lunched in a rather smart West End eaterie of the kind favoured by the better class of politician," Steven boasts. More gratifyingly still, there were "two Tory cabinet ministers — one, I remember, was Stephen Dorrell — sitting at the immediately adjacent table".

16 November: Following the Bernie Ecclestone affair, Tony Blair should sup with "a very long spoon" the next time he has "one of his businessmen friends in for lunch". Steven writes as something of an expert, of course. "Just before the last election a captain of industry confessed to me over lunch that he would be voting Labour." Steven does not reveal how long his own spoon was.

7 December: "I have a confession to make," Steven announces dramatically. "I am a friend of Jeremy Isaacs." Now he's in this confessional mood, there's no stopping him: "I've known Gerald Kaufman for many years, too." Well done!

21 December: Unpopular fat-cats are in the news, but Steven has a slight problem: "I don't know Geoffrey Robinson." No matter. "I do know Cedric Brown. Remember him?" Ah yes, the British Gas chappie. Brown is "charming as well as being a brilliant businessman. Two or three years ago, like Geoffrey Robinson, he was at the heart of a row over his finances." On the strength of this coincidence, Steven concludes that Robinson too must be "a charming man and an effective minister". Besides, he has been told as much by "a senior member of the administration".

11 January 1998: "An old editor of mine once called me into his office to say that he had lunched a cabinet minister who 'spoke rather well of you'. 'I'm pleased to hear that,' I said. 'Well I'm bloody not,' said the editor. 'When political journalists and politicians embrace, pity the poor reader'." Er, quite. Unabashed, Steven regales us with a conversation he has had with "that marvellous lady" Gillian Shephard.

1 February: Robin Cook is a first-rate foreign secretary. How does Steven know? He has it on the authority of "a very senior foreign office official who has been a friend for 30 years and who has never once led me astray". Did they discuss it over lunch, perchance? A small clue is given by Steven's gratuitous plug for Silvano Giraldin of Le Gavroche, "that prince among maitre d's".

22 February: "My lunch with one of the Prime Minister's closest aides had been organised many moons ago. But, not one to stand on ceremony, I didn't much mind when told over the telephone that because of the Gulf crisis his diary had become so full it would be better if I came in and lunched at his desk." Worse was to come, however. "His secretary added: 'And would you mind bringing in the sandwiches?' It was, surely, a first." A first for Stewart Steven, at any rate. "I was seen on Wednesday walking into Downing Street clutching a plastic bag containing our smoked salmon and tuna sarnies," he reports. "You do not hear me complain..." Of course not.

1 March: Dr David Owen, who has been spoken of as a possible leader of the campaign against a single currency, is a politician of the utmost honesty and intelligence. How does Steven know? "A few years ago I invited him to dinner," he explains. "It was a wholly social occasion and very pleasant too."

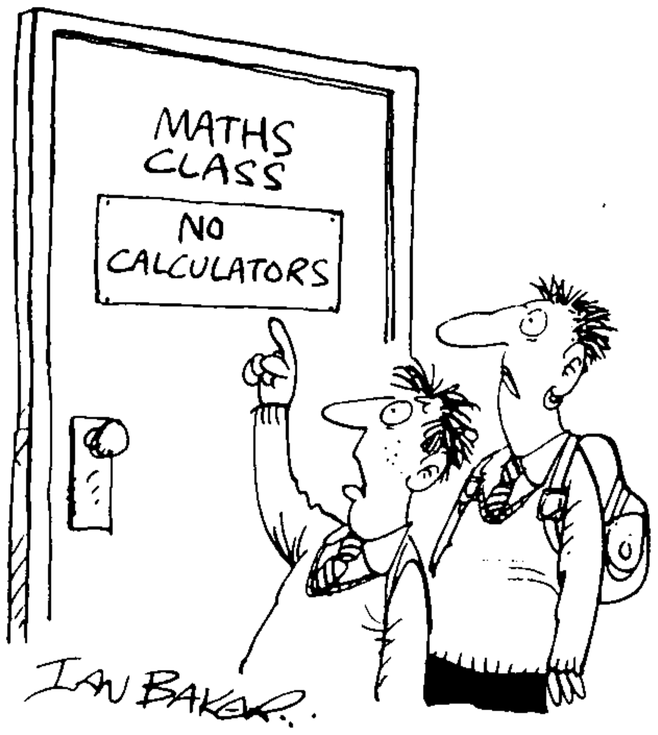
8 March?: "Lunching ministers these days is not as entertaining as it once was," our hero laments. Only last week he entertained an "old friend" from the Labour frontbench — and the ungrateful brute spent most of the meal defending the government. Still, at least they didn't have to make do with sandwiches. The lunch, Steven notes with satisfaction, took place in "one of London's more expensive hostelries". New Labour, nouvelle cuisine.

CHEMISTRY SETBACK

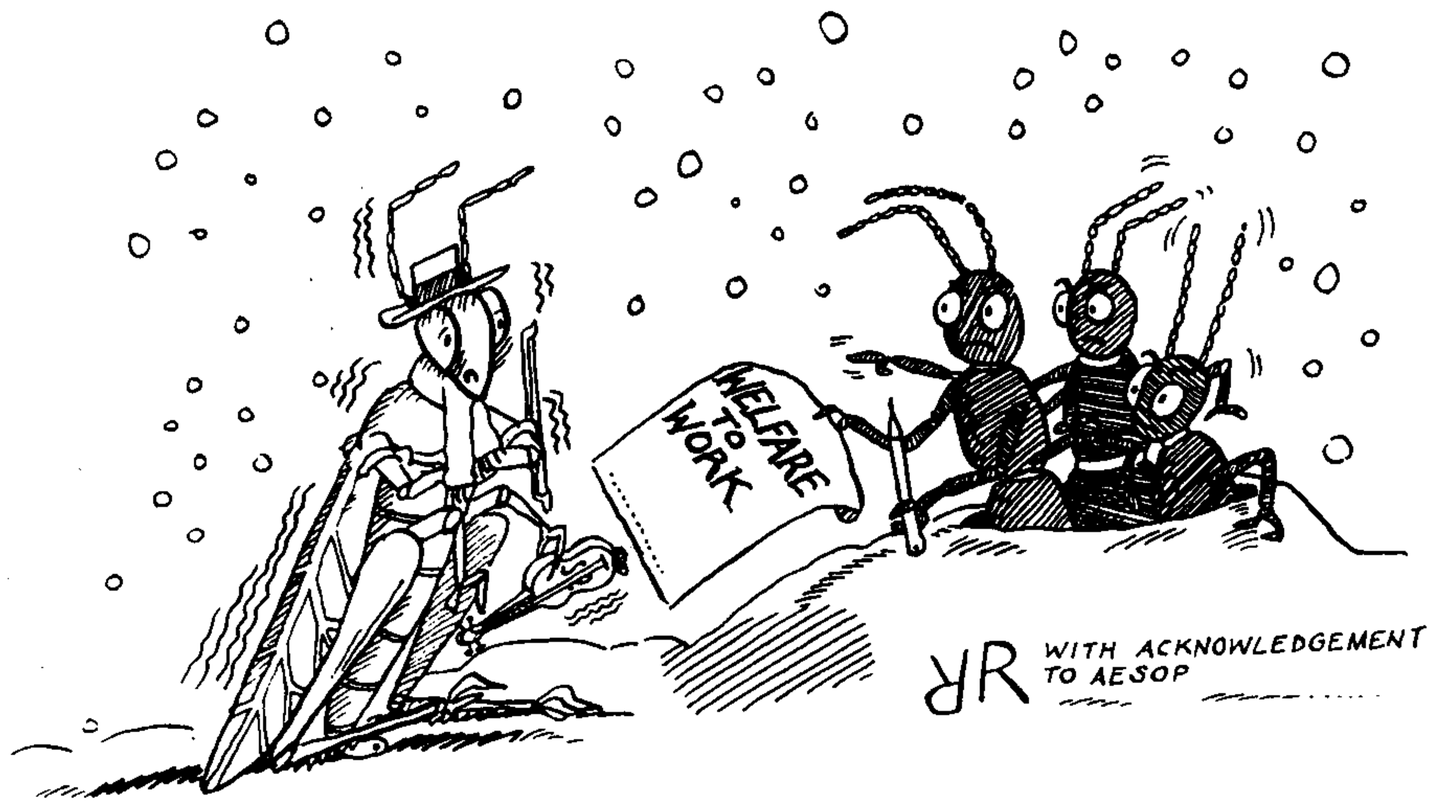
SAD tidings from a conference organised by the north-west branch of the Emergency Planning Society last month to discuss the derailment of a railway carriage carrying highly toxic vinyl chloride from ICI's Runcorn plant to South Wales.

No sooner had members of the fire service, police and railways settled into rooms made available by ICI at its Runcorn "Health site", than two ICI managers began explaining how competently the company and emergency services had dealt with the incident.

When Dr Virginia Murray, from ICI's medical toxicology unit, took the floor, however, the lights went out, an alarm went off, and a booming Tannoy ordered everyone in the Health Site to close the doors and windows and stay inside. There was, the company said later, "a leak of chlorine gas".



"What does that say?"



LABOUR backbenchers are laying bets on the "first ex-hard leftie" to make it into cabinet.

Could it be the once bearded treasury secretary Alistair Maclean Darling, a former leading advocate of nuclear free zones who was once described by Neil Kinnock as "that bloody Trot"?

Or could it be Darlington's smoothie MP Alan Milburn, a former supporter of Trade Union CND, and before that an activist in the forerunner to the Socialist Workers' Party, the International Socialists?

Then again it might even be Kim "Boyo" Howells, the former communist and head of research for the South Wales NUM. Howells will have earned extra Brownie points for his recent battering of students who had the temerity to criticise "new" Labour's planned tuition fees and abolition of maintenance grants. Fortunately for him, few will recall his leading role as a student leader during the Hornsey College sit-in when Harold Wilson was prime minister. Nor his revolutionary rhetoric in support of militant students at the Guildford Art College.

But odds-on favourite for early promotion is junior education minister Stephen Byers. As plain Steve Byers, and deputy leader of North Tyneside council, the moustache-wearing militant was prominent in attacking the Tories for their parsimony to local education authorities. As education chairman of the Association of Mètropolitan Authorities, Steve mounted a ferocious campaign "to return all grant maintained schools to council control within approximately 20 months of a Labour victory".

Sadly Steve's plan went off the rails when Tony decided to send his kids to the grant maintained London Oratory. Never mind: for Steve's biggest campaign was launched in defence of local education authorities when he threatened head teachers and senior staff with dismissal "and a possible end to their careers" should their schools opt out of council control. How could Steve have possibly known that within such a short time he and David Blunkett would be sending in hit squads and threatening to take poorly performing inner city schools, er, out of council control altogether.

BEFORE the general election Labour made great play of how it would "save the NHS" — particularly in Inverness, where the it distributed leaflets condemning the use of private finance initiative (PFI) funding for the new Stonehaven hospital for the Elderly.

The PFI would fund the new hospital, which would be owned and run by the private financiers. Labour's then Scottish health spokesman John McAllion called the scheme "a complete betrayal of the founding principles of the NHS". The local Labour candidate and now MP David Stewart went further and said: "I hope everyone will back the campaign to kill off the cancer of privatisation before it kills off our Highland Health Service."

The new PFI-financed hospital opened in the first week of March.

PASSENGERS on the northbound platform of the Jubilee Line at Charing Cross on the afternoon of Saturday 7 March were alarmed to see what appeared to be a gang of five rowdy Welsh rugby fans, en route to their team's clash with Scotland at Wembley, abusing the driver of a tube train which was delayed because of a problem further up the line.

One distressed lady passenger was surprised — and then relieved — to see that the leader of the Taff-pack in question was none other than former Labour leader Neil Kinnock. Clearly this was no incident of rugby rowdyism after all, she realised — merely the dedicated European Union transport commissioner doing his job and ensuring that the trains were running on time.

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown asked Barclays Bank chief executive Martin Taylor for tips for his budget. Specifically he wanted suggestions to increase employment — and Taylor is a strange choice.

He personally earns £15,769 a week. Whether he has a particular interest in job creation can be judged by his record at Barclays. The group shed 4,700 jobs in 1996 and 2,000 in 1997, including a major redundancy programme.

Still, Taylor is close to the "new" Labour administration: as well as being consulted by Brown, his bank has loaned Tony Blair an assistant for his Sedgefield constituency for one year, according to the register of MPs' interests.

THE powerful lobby against British imports of the deadly white asbestos got a tremendous boost with the election of a Labour government last May.

As early as 18 June, Angela Eagle, the new junior environment minister, was promising the Commons "a mechanism to be put in place, as a matter of urgency, for introducing a domestic ban on the import, supply and use of all asbestos". Blue and brown asbestos was already banned and most European countries had already banned white asbestos. Now Britain would follow.

The mechanism was duly put in place. A draft consultation document between the government and the health and safety executive (HSE) included the promised white asbestos import ban. But for "new" Labour, as ever, politics is a matter of priorities.

At a recent Commonwealth conference Tony Blair was lobbied hard by a minister in the Canadian government, who indicated that Canada might persuade the rest of the world to lift the ban on British beef. The only problem was, er, "this asbestos business". The minister hoped Blair would not rush to join in banning white asbestos imports, since so much of the stuff was made in Canada and so many Canadian jobs depended in it. Blair saw the point at once, and brusquely issued an order to the environment ministers. The draft document was altered and the promised ban dropped.

AS WELL as trying to pilot the bill for tuition fees through the Lords, Baroness Blackstone has also taken up the fight against nepotism in further education.

The appointment of sons, daughters, wives and husbands has spread like wildfire since the sector was freed from local authority control. Blackstone lectured the gathered heads of the colleges in Birmingham: "I am anxious that the procedures for the appointment to senior positions in college management should be open and fair."

She is an unlikely warrior for the cause. *Eye* readers may recall that Birkbeck college was run like a family firm while Blackstone was master. At one point the personnel secretary's daughter was given a job in the registry; the registrar's wife was working as his secretary; and the college secretary's daughter was working shifts in the nursery.

All these jobs were doled out while other staff were being made redundant. When challenged, Blackstone said "nepotism was a harsh word" for what went on.

PS: Blackstone's son Ben has just been given a job on the millennium dome.

FLUSHED with the success of the devolution referendum, the Scottish Labour party conference in Perth should have been a breeze for the leadership. But it wasn't.

Stroppy activists made plain their displeasure over cuts to single parent benefit before, in time honoured fashion, voting to abolish Trident. As a result one excitable new boy was overheard informing bored hacks in the conference bar that "next year we won't let them have a f***ing conference, we'll just hire a hall and stick lots of balloons up instead."

A rousing speech by the Dear Leader failed to lift delegates' dour spirits, especially when some immediately smelt a rat as Blair began heaping praise on former miners' leader and old *Daily Telegraph* bogeyman Mick McGahey. Not that the comrades disapproved of McGahey; just that the stunt had been played the year before when Blair played on his ancestral links with "Red Clydeside". Meanwhile Labour's Scottish high command went into overspin at a System 3 poll for the *Herald*, which put Alex Salmond's Scottish Nationalists a mere 1 percent behind Labour for elections to the new parliament. Party strategists at Keir Hardie House dismissed the poll, claiming that the government was "at a post euphoria, pre-delivery stage in the electoral cycle", an explanation that left punters in Govan scratching their heads in disbelief.

MEANWHILE the "will he, won't he" speculation as to whether the Labour leader will go over to Rome has gone some way to revive the ancient and particularly unpleasant Glasgow divisions of Green and Orange.

The *Herald* kicked off with a photo of Tony Blair seemingly playing a flute as he gesticulated during his conference speech, likening him to "a Tim". For "Tim Malloy was Fenian boy". Not to be outdone, Glasgow's Orangemen have taken to belting out Ian Paisley's old favourite, "Derry's Walls" each time the lord chancellor stumbles into view.

FABIAN HAMILTON, the on-message MP for Leeds North East selected as a safe pair of hands after Tony Blair vetoed leftwinger Liz Davies (*Eyes passim*), will appear before Morley magistrates next month to answer questions about his allegedly dodgy business practices.

For someone with so many enemies — the private prosecution was initiated by Labour party comrades — Hamilton might have been expected to try to keep in with his friends. But his erstwhile colleagues in Leeds, where he retains a seat on the city council, are puzzled that he should have started publicly attacking the Labour-controlled authority.

He was recently quoted at length in the *Jewish Telegraph* accusing Leeds education department of having "no understanding at all of the needs of the Leeds Jewish community". Why? Because it declined to support a Jewish high school for Leeds on the grounds that there were already surplus places in the city's schools. Exactly the same reason for rejecting a high school was given before last May, when the council's education chairman was.., er... Fabian Hamilton.

NEW LABOUR, NEW CONSERVATIVES

GREAT and furious was the indignation among Welsh Labour MPs when David Rowe-Beddoe, of 5 Avenue de Grand Bretagne, Monaco, and chair of the Monte Carlo branch of Conservatives Abroad, was appointed chairman of the influential Welsh Development Agency in 1993.

Even greater was the indignation when the *Eye* revealed the following year (856) that Mr Rowe-Beddoe, while staying on as WDA chairman, had been allowed to join the board of Development Securities, a property company run by property king Martin Landau, of Monte Carlo Palace, 3 Boulevard de Moullins, Monaco.

Landau's former company, Imry, did very well out of a speculative property venture at Ashford, Kent from which the church commissioners lost £80m. What specially annoyed Labour MPs like Ron Davies and Peter Hain, was that a director of Development Securities was the former treasurer of the Tory party and Thatcher favourite Lord McAlpine, and that before long the company got a new chairman: Lord Gowrie, former Tory arts minister and later chairman of the Arts Council.

Even greater was Labour's indignation when Mr Rowe-Beddoe got another public chairmanship, that of the Development Board of Rural Wales, bringing his joint salary to £70,000 a year.

But indignation dies very quickly when new ministers take office. Now the same Ron Davies, as secretary of state for Wales, supported by his under-secretary Peter Hain, announces the appointment of a chairman of a new public body called, absurdly, Economic Powerhouse for Wales. The body incorporates the old WDA, DBRW, and the Land Authority for Wales. And in case you haven't guessed it, the new chairman is David Rowe-Beddoe.

Dean Reece, 21, of Pennine Way, Kirkby, who pleaded guilty to seven robberies and possessing an imitation forearm with intent to commit robbery, *Liverpool Daily Post*

"I AM delighted that Elliott Bernerd will be the chairman of the South Bank Centre," announced culture secretary Chris Smith in a statement on 11 March. "Mr Bernerd and I have agreed that it must be his first priority to focus on the future of the South Bank Centre, and on developing achievable plans for its redevelopment."

No one knows more about such things than Mr Bernerd, an extremely wealthy property developer. In 1986, when he was chairman of Morgan Grenfell Laurie Ltd, the property services arm of Morgan Grenfell merchant bank, he persuaded his friend Mrs Violet Seulberger-Simon to buy £8.5m worth of shares in Guinness as part of the notorious share support operation in 1986. (For Bernerd's role in the Guinness story see Slicker, *Eyes* 795, 803, 851, 887, 895.)

After leaving Morgan Grenfell, Bernerd set up his own property group, Chelsfield. His devotion to culture was on parade in 1992, when the company sponsored two London Philharmonic Concerts. Bernerd became a close friend and adviser of the then Tory heritage secretary David Mellor. When Mellor was obliged to resign from the cabinet over matters Ugandan, he became a paid parliamentary consultant to Chelsfield.

Meanwhile Labour councillors at Westminster were outraged by a letter seized from the offices of Tory leader David Weeks by the district auditors as part of the latter's inquiry into Lady Porter's gerrymandering. Weeks had written to Bernerd in 1993 making some not very subtle hints about the Tories' business plans, cash flows — and eight marginal wards which could go Labour and destroy the council's plans for property development.

Since 1991 Chelsfield had been negotiating with the council over ambitious development plans for the Wool House in Carlton Gardens, one of the most lucrative potential developments in London. Tory attempts to raise funds from such an obviously interested party was not acclaimed on the Labour benches. All such partisan testiness has now vanished as "new" Labour finds just the Right man for the South Bank.

'Backbiter'

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE East Cliff at Whitby in Yorkshire is one of the most magical places in England — the climb up the steps from the little harbour to St Mary's parish church, that pleasing jumble of Medieval and Georgian overlooking the sea, and then, beyond, the ruins of the great abbey church. It is all very strange and special — but not for much longer if our cultural guardians at English Heritage have their way in sublime indifference to every piece of expert advice they have asked for.

The ostensible aim is to improve the headland between the church and the abbey which is at present spoiled by a ticket kiosk by the ruins and by the cars left lying about by visitors too lazy and unimaginative to climb up the steps from the town. And the key to doing this is the Abbey House, the collections of buildings and gardens created after the Reformation by the Cholmley family on the site of the abbot's house. At present, the ruins of the 17th century banqueting house are used as a car park for the Abbey House Hotel nearby, and English Heritage wants to convert the ruins into a visitor centre and museum — the usual sort of heritage thing.

So far, so good. But where are the hotel's cars to go? Why, in a brand new car park in the Abbey House gardens. Unfortunately these gardens happen to be interesting. In fact, they are as rare and special as the rest of Whitby: a complex of walled courts and garden terraces overlooking the town in which — most unusually — Romantic features like the abbey ruins were incorporated by the Cholmleys.

The layout of these 17th century gardens has survived more or less intact. The Garden History Society considers that "the garden and all the buildings and features are important in their own right, but it is as a group in a spectacular setting that they gain their significance." English Heritage's own experts recommended that the unique Whitby Abbey gardens be added to the Register of historic gardens, but this has not happened. Why? Because, to create the car park, a new access route must be created and this must smash through a 17th century wall while massive earthworks will be piled up over the terraces.

The scheme is breathtaking in its destructiveness and stupidity. Naturally, it was opposed by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Garden History Society, as well as by English Heritage's own responsible officers. It was also opposed by the expert advisers to the heritage lottery fund, which is expected to help pay for all this road engineering. But the fund was persuaded not to insist that finding an alternative solution be a necessary condition for helping the whole Whitby project. And who was the plausible persuader? Mr Steven Johnson, the heritage lottery fund's new head of operations who, in a previous life, had been head of English Heritage's northern region which had cooked up the Whitby Abbey House car park scheme in the first place.

English Heritage would surely never allow any commercial concern to do what is now proposed — it would tell them to find alternatives. Yet our official heritage guardians, with the help of lottery (ie public) money, is now going to wreck something of great historical and architectural interest and scenic beauty. The scheme has now received planning permission from Scarborough borough council. English Heritage has, of course, a statutory duty to maintain the abbey ruins, but these days, responding to the dynamic forward-looking ethos of Cool Britannia and "new" Labour, the boys in "Major Projects" are much more interested in commercialising its assets and making money.

The only hope for Whitby now is that the chairman of English Heritage might intervene. He has, after all, fought long and hard for Stonehenge; perhaps Ol' Piranha Teeth may understand the precious magic of Whitby — and remember what English Heritage is meant to be *for*.

IN EYE 921 I discussed the sad story of the Round House, a remarkable 17th century building in Bedfordshire neglected for years by the London Brick Company and then acquired for a song by one James Harris with a view to restoration. Well, high hopes collapsed into squabbling and financial inadequacy, and now I read that the west wall has collapsed and what little is left of the Round House is doomed. Mid Bedfordshire district council could have got tough with Mr Harris through repairs notices and compulsory purchase, but it couldn't be bothered.

A council spokesman says: "It is terribly sad that one of the county's more interesting buildings has now been lost forever." Well, yes. But at least Bedfordshire can now maintain its enviable reputation as the most boring county in Britain.

I HAD resolved not to say another word about the most boring *subject* in Britain, that is, the plastic tent at Greenwich cooked up by Michael Heseltine which Mr Peter Mandelson, in the way of great men, now seems to think is entirely his own idea.

The exorbitant vacuity of this project has of course attracted a certain amount of criticism. And our government dislikes this. Quite how much is revealed by the fact that, after writing a slightly negative article about The D***, Jonathan Glancey, architectural correspondent of the *Grauniad*, was rung up and berated by one Tim Allen, number two to Mr Blair's Goebbels, Alistair Campbell. Now why haven't I had a call? I suppose it is my duty to bore on.

'Piloti'

WORLD OF SPORT

MOHAMED "Al" Fayed, that great benefactor of football, has Fulham supporters down at Craven Cottage worried about his development plans for the ground.

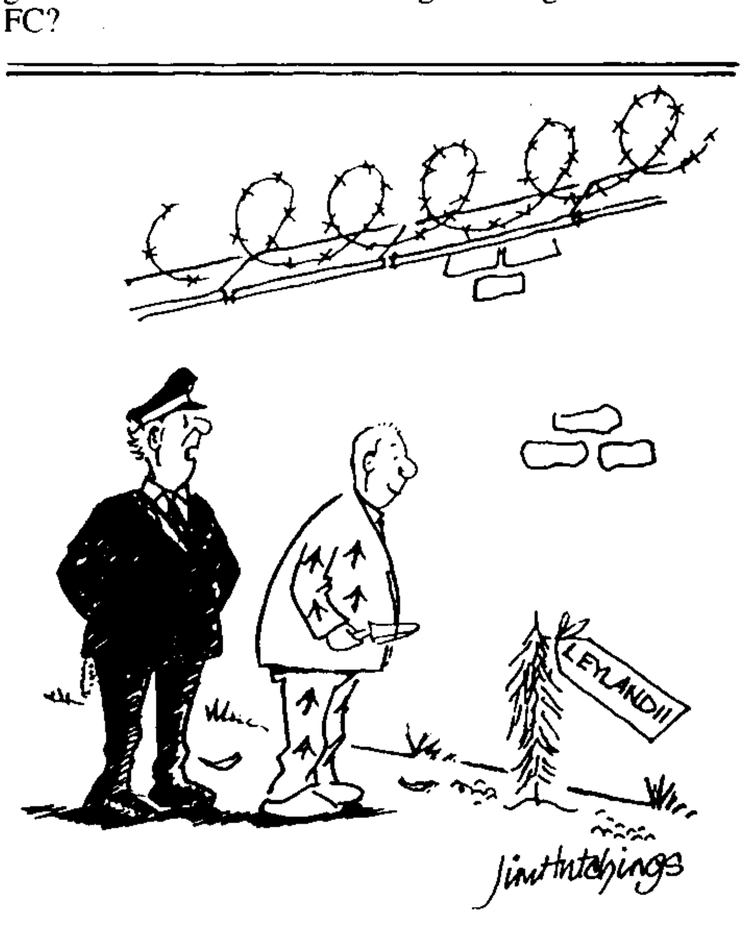
When the phony pharaoh took over the ailing second division club last year, he promised to spend £30m on rebuilding the team and transforming the ramshackle ground to a 30,000-seater that would be the envy of many bigger clubs.

He duly brought in Kevin Keegan and Ray Wilkins as the management team, who splashed out £7m on new players. But this expensively assembled side still struggles against ordinary, bargain-basement teams, and has only an outside hope of a place in the end-of-season promotion play-offs.

Meanwhile the only planning permission for the ground which the football club holds remains an earlier scheme for a modest 15,000-capacity football ground, together with 122 Thames-side apartments — just the sort of lucrative property development from which Fayed assured supporters he had saved the club.

Despite his protestations that he has no intention to use the existing plans, Fayed has so far failed to submit any alternative scheme to the local authority. Any redevelopment will not now begin in May, as originally suggested, but has been postponed until 1999.

Will Fayed still be there by then? Or has he already set his sights on taking over a more glamorous club — such as neighbouring Chelsea FC?



EYE TV

Our Mutual Friend (BBC2)
Real Women (BBC1)
Playing The Field (BBC1)

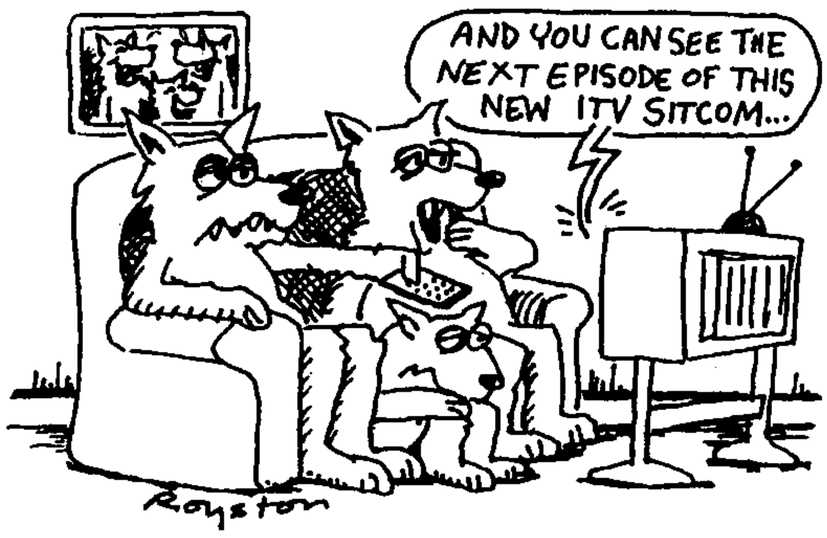
AT a recent media dinner party, Benjy Wegg-Prosser, Peter Mandelson's representative on earth, was sitting near a BBC employee. A sarcastic Panorama on Mandy's beloved dome project had just been broadcast. "What I can't understand," said Wegg-Prosser, "is this. Alan Yentob [BBC director of television] thinks the dome is a good idea. So why does he allow programmes saying it isn't?"

You can see that — to an employee of a government obsessed with keeping everyone "on message" — it might be hard to understand that an organisation could allow — in fact, might be statutorily required to permit — plurality of opinion and independent journalism. But "new" Labour seems to be having trouble in general understanding the BBC.

Government is supposed to have an arm's-length relationship with the corporation but, not content with Alastair Campbell's regular paranoid attacks on BBC journalism, culture and heritage secretary Chris Smith has just made an editorial intervention. He warned the BBC governors that too many costume dramas were appearing in the schedules and that he wished to see more gritty contemporary drama.

For a party allegedly brilliant at presentation, "new" Labour keeps showing a remarkable capacity for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. Smith's little bit of television criticism is ill-considered for three reasons.

The first is that the best contemporary television drama has always been hostile to everything "new" Labour represents. Mr Smith would presumably be delighted if the BBC produced a Cathy Come Home for the 1990s, centring on a victim of the new welfare-to-work scheme. Or how about more stuff like Our Friends In The North, that epic award-winning attack on Labour corruption in local government and the pathetic hunger of the working classes to become middle-class? Or perhaps the BBC could phone up Trevor Griffiths and Jim Allen, currently underused leftwing playwrights who wrote savage and brilliant plays attacking the last Labour government? If any such stuff reached the screen, Mandelson and Campbell would be screaming into Birt's ear straightaway.



A quiet moment in the hyena household

The second reason Smith is talking bollocks is that one of the reasons the BBC produces so many classic adaptations is the financial position imposed on it by the last government and enthusiastically supported by this one. Costume drama is far more likely to attract coproduction money and foreign sales than contemporary fiction, which is seen as much more nationally specific. Production values remain higher too. The Americans would not expect US actors or locations to be used in a Dickens or Austen, but would certainly inflict such pressures on present-day scripts.

But the third objection to the culture secretary's big idea is the strongest. With uncanny timing, he issued his prescription just before one of the best classic adaptations in history (the current BBC2 Our Mutual Friend) was screened. This Dickens is everything a costume drama should be: narratively clear, imaginatively cast, filmed with extraordinary sensitivity to light and dark.

Making things even worse for Smith, Our Mutual Friend coincides with two contemporary serials which have the strong smell of the focus group about them: women and football in Playing The Field on Sundays, women and women in Real Women on Thursdays. Though mildly entertaining to watch, both of these series show that the absence of any big political argument in society — itself an achievement of "new" Labour — has drained away the energy from which the best contemporary drama has come.

Smith's instruction to governors is an entirely typical "new" Labour opinion, not only because it echoes something said by Rupert Murdoch (who once told the Edinburgh television festival that costume dramas were class-ridden) but because it uncritically assumes that anything modern must be better than something old.

New Labour, New Drama comes the message, with the clear hint that Botney ought to be commissioning Cool Britannia: The Serial. Hey, perhaps, they could get Ben Elton or David Hare to write it, except that, oops, they've just announced their disillusionment with "new" Labour. Maybe Jarvis Cocker or Damon from Blur could do the soundtrack, except that they keep writing pieces critical of the government.

So wonderfully wrong-headed is Smith's scheme at every level that you begin to think that, come the reshuffle, he may be having rather more time to watch television than he has now. Perhaps Botney should send him round the tapes of Our Mutual Friend for those long evenings ahead.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

THE one charge that annoys James Boyle, controller of Radio 4, more than any other — that his network is "dumbing down".

This is of course untrue, as a brief examination of recent items on the flagship *Today* programme will confirm.

It carried news, for instance, of Asda's centre for grocery excellence (2 March); and the latest on the progress of Henrietta the sex-change hen. There was news too of the fortunes of the hysterically named El Niño who was blamed for bad weather (3 March); and the man who wouldn't buy a house because it was haunted by ghosts who "made his family's life miserable" (4 March). Later in the same programme came the revelation that the Marquess of Bath's butler was descended from Cheddar Man.

An investigation later in the week revealed that half of all vegetarians are secret meat-eaters (5 March) and that a library book had just been returned after being on loan for 135 years (6 March). On the foreign front on the same day we learnt that a 7ft gorilla had been spotted in Florida.

Finally came news that two brothers in the fireplace business had fallen out (11 March) and an obscure poet had written an advert for Virgin Atlantic (12 March).

A SPECIAL OBN award for loyalty beyond the call of duty goes to Adam Boulton, the Stakhanovite political editor of Sky News.

Asked by the *Guardian* to nominate his "icon of the 20th century", he chose Margaret Thatcher — but hastily added that his runners-up would include "Rupert Murdoch and the TV set".

DEMORALISED hacks at *World in Action* are asking why departing editor Steve Boulton is conveniently getting the blame for Granada's embarrassing £700,000 libel defeat at the hands of Marks & Spencer.

The programme accurately revealed that an M&S supplier in Morocco had been exploiting child labour but, according to M&S and the jury, inaccurately implied that Marks knew about it.

Colleagues are sore about the departure of Boulton, a highly-respected telly hack who edited the celebrated "Jonathan of Arabia" programme which led to the downfall of the spanking great liar Jonathan Aitken.

Boulton did not edit the M&S programme — he was in New Zealand at the time. The man responsible was Granada's head of factual programmes, Charles Tremayne, who has kept his job.

PRESSURE of work seems to have been getting to Stephen Whittle, high-minded director of the Broadcasting Standards Commission.

Sadly, "Mr Taste and Decency", as he is known to colleagues, has just been divorced for the third time for, er, "unreasonable behaviour".

COAST to COAST
RAMBLING AND ON AND ON ...
WAY OFF TRACK & OVER THE HILL...
TO THE POINT WHERE IT BECOMES PAINFUL ...
AND WISHED SHE'D TAKE A HIKE
KenPyne

HUNDREDS of people from the world of TV and films flocked to the Business Design Centre in Islington recently for The Production Show, a series of talks, seminars and exhibits devoted to the future of broadcasting in the new millennium, etc.

Industry professionals paid more than £20 a head to attend seminars on riveting subjects such as "The Economics of Digital" and "The Demise of Spot Advertising".

There was precious little interest in one significant event, however. For some reason hardly anyone wanted to hear culture secretary Chris "Nice But Dull" Smith giving his views on, er, "various aspects of government policy relating to television and film" with John Mulholland, meejah editor of the *Grauniad*.

A week before the show, with hardly any tickets sold, organiser Tim Macpherson was reduced to writing to all his mates offering free admission to this hugely important event. "The discussion is sure to create a lot of interest," wrote Macpherson, desperately. (It didn't.) In the end about 40 people turned up to get out of the cold, which still left the room, one of the BDC's smallest, half empty.

Why the lack of interest? Could it be that arts and TV people already feel thoroughly let down by "new" Labour? Or, as one independent producer told the *Eye*: "Who wants to listen to all that Cool Britannia bollocks all over again?"

CHANNEL 4's reputation as a free-thinking, PC television station is alive and well.

First there was its benefit for Liverpool dockers at the Palladium. Channel 4 lapped up the stand-up comic names involved but wouldn't allow any trades union banners to be displayed or dock workers t-shirts to be worn — surely missing the point of the whole occasion?

Then, in a recent episode of the *Mark Thomas Comedy Product* the production team discovered that a piece of art belonging to the Tory MP Nicholas "Fatty" Soames was held on a conditionally exempt art list. This meant it was tax free but also that it should be available for public inspection. The show took some workers from the strike-bound Magnet Kitchens plant in Darlington to view Soames's art.

When Mark Thomas turned to camera to explain that Soames had now removed the piece from the conditionally exempt list and had thus had to pay £8,000 tax on it, a Magnet worker (locked out for the last two years) held up a sign saying "Don't Buy Magnet Kitchens". Soames's embarrassment and Thomas's swearing were all deemed acceptable, but the disputing workers' sign was not. Channel 4 censors insisted the offending scene was cut.

FIRE BREAKS

WHILE London's fire brigades announce cuts, cuts and more cuts to services, the body in charge of them is running up bills of its own.

The London Fire and Civil Defence Authority (LFCDA), which took control of the brigades from the Greater London Council, is a Labour-run authority. But that hasn't stopped it bringing in new contracts to increase firemen's hours and dock pay if they are sick for more than two days a year. The authority insists this has been necessary to meet a budget reduction of £700,000.

Meanwhile councillors who sit on the LFCDA have authorised spending £34,000 on a marble entrance hall for their building. According to the authority's leader, Coun Tony Ritchie: "Whilst this may seem expensive, it must be borne in mind that the new marble panelling has a long life and requires little maintenance."

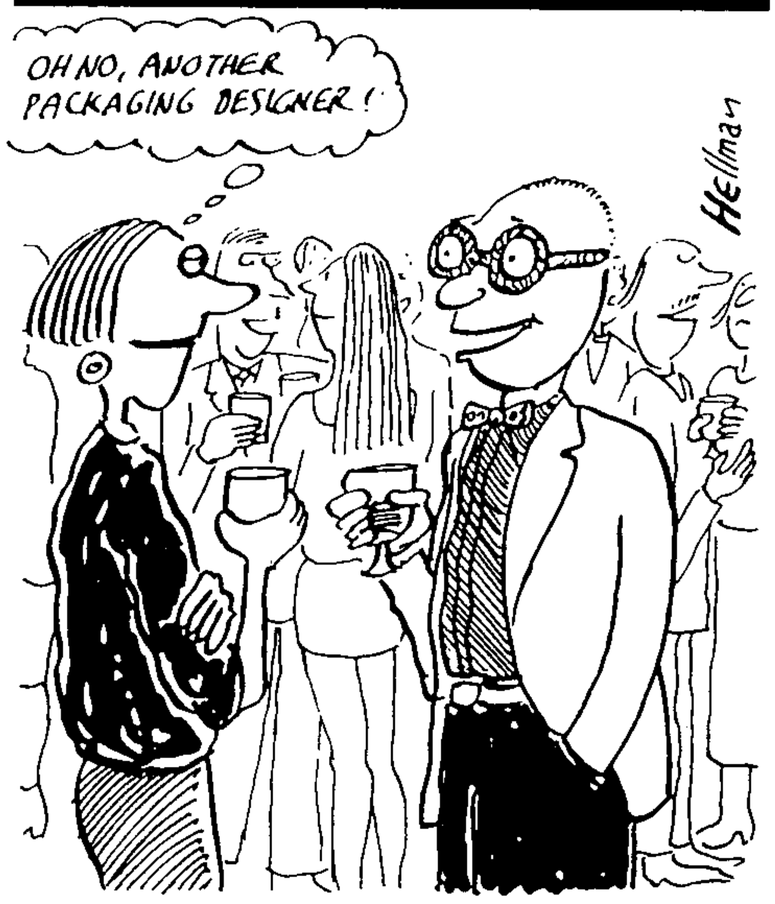
TAXING QUESTION

EARL Spencer's Althorp estate is conditionally exempt from tax, a concession from the Inland Revenue given in return for some public access to the property.

The revenue states that properties which are conditionally exempt must be open to public view, but that a *reasonable* charge can be made. Does it think £9.50 to see Diana's grave is a reasonable charge? Or what about £40 for a ticket to a charity pop concert near the burial site?

JUST FANCY THAT!

THERE was a mouthwatering choice of events for boffins attending the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Philadelphia last month. The 13 February programme, for example, offered a special lecture from President William J Clinton, no less, followed by five hours of... "oral presentations".



"Well, I restratify brand hierarchies to empower renewed appetite appeal..."

LOTTERY NEWS

UNDAUNTED by the bad publicity it has endured since Richard Branson's libel case, Camelot is now embarking on its most shameless enterprise yet.

The new TV Dreams scratchcard is being promoted as the first scratchcard to have its own prime-time television show. What hasn't been noticed is that it is the first venture from which Camelot stands to make rather more money than the famous "good causes".

Most literature dealing with the lottery, including that published by Camelot, claims that 50 percent of the proceeds are distributed in prize money, 28 percent go to good causes and just 5 percent to Camelot. But this isn't true of TV Dreams: 63.3 percent will go in prize money, and while the TV shows are being broadcast — the first appears at the end of this month — between 10 and 11 percent will be retained by Camelot. This will leave the good causes with less than 10 percent.

It would have been quite within Oflot's power to keep the payout down to 50 percent. Instead, the regulator merely sets an overall target for the whole year, within which Camelot can do what it likes. This enables Camelot to short-change national lottery winners (the payout on lottery tickets is only 45 percent) in order to boost its scratchcard sales.

Oflot's attitude, based on the swings and roundabouts principle, is that none of this matters as long as the figures balance over the year. What it seems not to have asked is: will this raise more money for good causes? The TV Dreams card will be given 45 minutes of free advertising on prime-time television every week. If demand exceeds six million a week (that's £12m in face value), there won't be enough cards to go round. Since scratch-cards already sell to the value of £15m a week — and many buyers of these will simply transfer their allegiance to TV Dreams — this is quite probable.

Do these cards need to have such a high payout — 63.3 percent — to create a demand that may not be met? Camelot won't be unduly worried, since it gets 11 percent on the first 800 million cards sold and 10 per cent on the next 900 million, come what may. Nor will the punters, who are being offered far better odds than usual. The only losers are likely to be the "good causes" — who were supposed to be the *raison d'etre* of the whole exercise.

WATERWORLD

NEWS that water companies have been reducing mains pressure to hit their leakage targets comes as no surprise to industry observers, even though fire brigades complain that the pressure drop is preventing them from putting out fires and endangering lives.

Although the water companies have paid almost £8bn in shareholder dividends since privatisation, presided over a 300 percent rise in water bills and laid off a third of their staff, they still say they can only afford to replace their decrepit mains systems by 2070.

This latest spat is not the first time the companies have fallen out with the fire brigades they serve. When Northumbrian Water replaced its water mains and fire hydrants last summer, it insisted the Tyne Wear fire authority pay for the new hydrants, at between £295 and £1,180 per hydrant, even though the old ones were in good working order (*Eye* 932).

Over at Thames Water, the infrastructure renewals budget, intended to replace mains and stop leaks, was underspent for two consecutive years. When pressure groups asked for the money to be repaid to the customer (some £15 per Thames consumer), Thames implored Ofwat, the water regulator, not to make it repay, pointing out that it had the lowest water bills already. Ofwat agreed.

Diana balls

"A former landlady is upset after she was branded unsympathetic over the death of Princess Diana. Sara Hescott suffered severe bruising to her face and head in an assault by customer Mark Bridge on 1 September. Hove Crown Court heard jobless Bridge, 39, dragged her into the toilets because he felt she had been 'less than sympathetic' about the tragedy. But in an exclusive interview with the *Herald*, Mrs Hescott said she had been distraught about the death... Bridger, of Redoubt Road, Eastbourne, was given a nine-month sentence."

— *Eastbourne Herald*
(submitted by Dr M.B. Simpson).

"Working it out recently, I calculated that I'd had 40 sexual partners in the month following Princess Diana's funeral. Not since her death — nothing during that first week — but since the funeral on the following Saturday. All safe sex, and I include a few threesomes... This particular death briefly abolished loneliness because suddenly everyone had a route into everyone else."

— Duncan Fallowell, London *Evening Standard*.

DOUBLE glazing firm Direct Windows at Capel Manor recently advertised in the *Edgware and Mill Hill Press* telling customers that "incredibly — we don't offer gimmicks". Nonetheless, customers will be "pleased to know that Direct Windows will soon be opening a conservatory showroom in the Princess Diana Memorial Garden at Capel Manor".

SIGNAL FAILURES

LABOUR is in no position to criticise the creation of yet more rail millionaires through the resale of Great Western Holdings: such windfalls are partly a result of Labour's spinelessness.

When privatisation of British Rail began, the Labour opposition promised to be tough on private companies and even talked of renationalisation. As the party was looking almost certain to come to power, Labour's mutterings made potential investors wary and depressed the prices of the earliest businesses transferred to the private sector. Among them was Great Western Trains, franchised to the GWH management buy-out.

In power, however, Labour's tough stance has turned to jelly and the rail businesses have become increasingly attractive to acquisitive companies. Since the election performance on GWT has fallen short of even the generous standards set in the passenger's charter, and the Southall crash has raised questions about GWT's attitude to safety.

Had Labour kept to its promises, GWH would have been hauled over the coals and now be living with the possibility that GWT could be transferred back to BR at any time. Instead Labour has done nothing significant to tighten regulation of franchises and GWT's franchise has been extended by three years.

● FURTHER light is shed on Railtrack's attitude to safety by documents leaked to the *Eye* following the award of a £400m, four-year maintenance contract for the west coast line to Fastline, which won the business while its own safety regime was still under review.

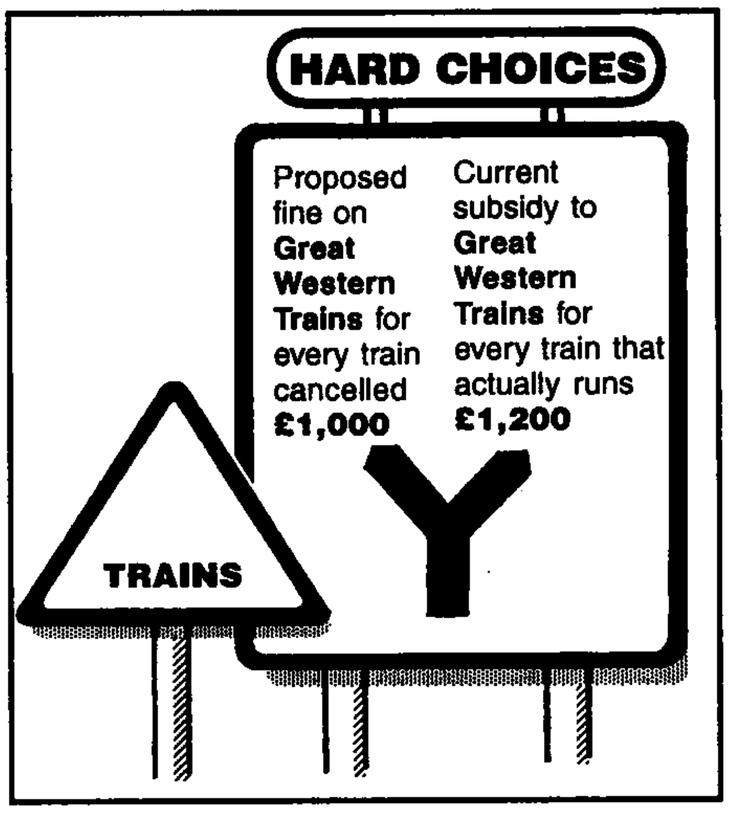
A Railtrack log shows how numerous incidents occurred last summer in the Midlands where lines had been closed for Fastline to renew track. Fastline staff were not to blame in every case, but the firm takes overall responsibility for its subcontractors. Railtrack placed some of the incidents in category A — the most serious category — and one of them, at Kenilworth (see *Eye* 932), could have resulted in multiple deaths after a Fastline subcontractor mis-wired a signal.

Shortly after this and other incidents, Railtrack project managers became aware that Railtrack's directors were planning to give Fastline a new contract on most of the west coast line. Managers felt obliged to tell them of Fastline's recent form. Fastline's safety performance was rated at 20 percent — compared with 80 to 100 percent for other companies. And one manager claimed: "Fastline have overstretched themselves to the extent that a number of incidents and accidents have occurred, leading to a review of their safety case. They do not have enough resources to cover the work."

PS: Railtrack still named Fastline as preferred bidder for the new contract, which begins in May. The contract includes the busiest parts of the decrepit west coast line where the tracks' cramped surroundings demand experience and deftness from engineers. Fastline built its experience in eastern England, where such factors are not as acute.

PPS: There is a silver lining to the saga. While Railtrack directors were arranging for Fastline to win the contract, Fastline was acquired from its management shareholders — who got the business from the government for a song — by infrastructure company Jarvis for £46m. David Doggett, a former BR civil engineer, and fellow Fastline managers shared a reported windfall of £12.7m plus shares in Jarvis.

'Dr B. Ching'


HARD CHOICES
Proposed fine on Great Western Trains for every train cancelled £1,000
Current subsidy to Great Western Trains for every train that actually runs £1,200
TRAINS

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE Phillips inquiry into government handling of the "mad cow scandal" started with evidence from Roger Tomkins, whose 24-year-old daughter Clare is dying of "new strain" CJD.

Mr Tomkins's harrowing account of Clare's illness told how his daughter had been struck down over Christmas 1996 with this horrifying disease, which had "a devastating effect" on her family. It could even have triggered off his wife's ovarian cancer. When Mr Tomkins finished, Lord Justice Phillips congratulated him for his "courage" and the gallery "erupted into spontaneous applause".

It was generally accepted as unquestioned fact, not least in the coverage by the BBC, that the only possible cause of Miss Tomkins's dreadful disease could have been eating beefburgers in the early 1980s, before she became a vegetarian. No one therefore seemed to think it odd that this heartrending story should feature so prominently so soon after the start of an inquiry intended to take a dispassionate look at the history of BSE, without any preconceptions as to whether there actually is any link between BSE and nvCJd.

Even odder was the way no one seemed to notice how Mr Tomkins's evidence itself raised some rather important unanswered questions. Firstly, recalling that the government itself only officially recognised BSE in 1986, how could it be explained that Clare should have contracted nvCJD when she did not eat beef after 1985? Secondly, there was the interesting fact that it had then taken nearly a year for her condition to be correctly diagnosed, even though nvCJD was by now being given more publicity than any condition since Aids.

For ten months doctors assumed her disorder was psychiatric, offering her little more than counselling and anti-depressant pills. If it took so long to identify her disease when every doctor in the country must have been aware of its signs, how do we know there might not have been many similarly unidentified cases of nvCJD before the disease was officially recognised in 1994?

A key part of the case for nvCJD being caused by BSE has been the notion that it only suddenly appeared four years ago. But if, as a good many scientists suspect, nvCJD was in fact around for many years before that, unrecognised, this questions the view that nvCJD could only have been caused by a cattle disease which itself only appeared in the mid-1980s.

Even now there is still no hard evidence of any causal link between the two diseases, and the number of cases of nvCJD so far identified has remained for months at 23. Yet if the conjecture of a link is correct, one would expect the bell-curve of new cases to be soaring up towards those epidemic proportions which professors Pattison and Lacey and all the other doomsayers were predicting two years ago. This is not the case and it may be that however much one may sympathise with his daughter's awful plight, Mr Tomkins's evidence may turn out not to have been relevant to an inquiry into BSE.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

NATIONAL BAD SCIENCE WEEK

FEW will have avoided the recent suggestion by Dr Andrew Wakefield, of the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine in London, that MMR, the triple vaccine against mumps, measles and rubella, may be connected to bowel disease and autism.

However, two weeks after Wakefield's claims were published in the 27 February issue of the *Lancet*, and rocketed into the media by a showy press conference, British taxpayers are now funding the damage limitation.

The chief medical officer Sir Kenneth Calman has had to send out an estimated 10,000 letters assuring GPs, nurses and health authorities of the safety of the jab. Doing penance for the Royal Free itself has been its dean, virologist Professor Arie Zuckerman, who is also director of the World Health Organisation reference centre on viral diseases. Publicly Prof Zuckerman "strongly" advises parents to continue "protecting their children by immunisation against measles, mumps and rubella with the MMR vaccine". Privately he is said to be "well hacked off".

As well he might be. Translating sympathy for the rare victims of adverse reactions to vaccines, or anger at government intransigence in recognising their plight, into approval for Wakefield is to court flapdoodle.

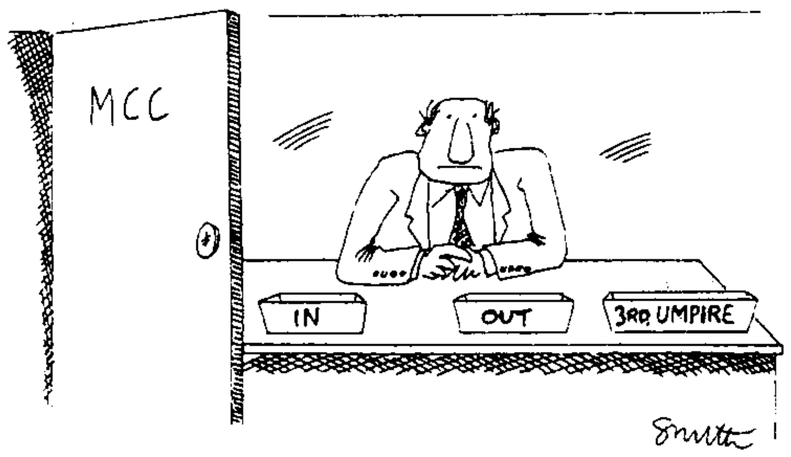
The idea of connecting bowel disorders with measles and measles vaccines has been knocking around Barts since the 1980s, and New Jersey before that. It moved to Hampstead with "experimental gastro-enterologist" John Walker-Smith, now a professor at the Royal Free. Over the years, working with Walker-Smith, Wakefield's many claims for a measles-bowel connection included spotting measles nucleoprotein filaments in cells from inflamed bowels. However, according to an independent electron microscopist, these filaments also appeared in controls and were quite normal. Even the great Zuckerman was privately growling to reporters last month that Wakefield hasn't proved this most basic connection using any of the available assays.

In this new study Wakefield's test group consisted of a dozen children referred precisely because they suffered bowel or behavioural disorders. Like most of us, the majority of them had been vaccinated. And this time, Wakefield has not only linked MMR with bowel problems, but suggested that these in turn may interrupt food absorption, which then might lead to autism.

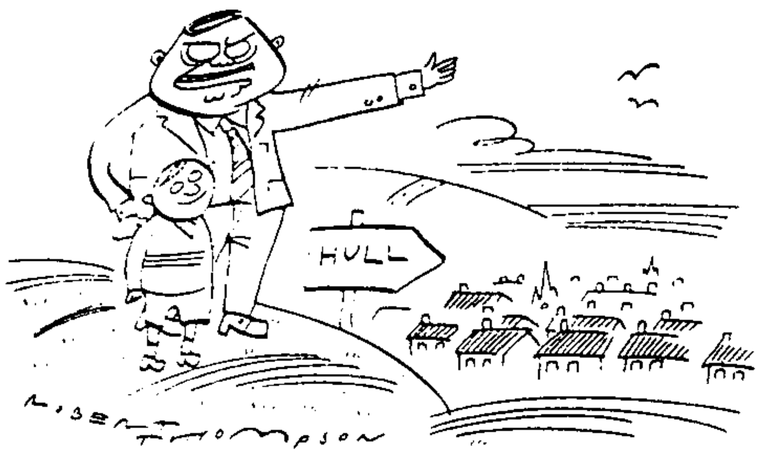
Though it legitimised the "syndrome" by publishing Wakefield, the *Lancet* was nervous enough to run two pieces in the same issue debunking it. One showed no evidence of measles in one of the bowel disorders studied by Wakefield.

The other was by two sceptics from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia. It struck them as odd that in a behavioural disorder theoretically caused by malabsorption of food, the behavioural problems tended to appear before gut ones. They noted that autism is detectable about the age of two, in children whether they are immunised or not, and that in the larger scheme of things, the recognition of autism long pre-dates use of MMR. They remarked Wakefield did not offer evidence of rising autism for the 600,000 children in the UK immunised each year with MMR. It seemed to them that in the last 25 years, during which hundreds of millions of people have been successfully vaccinated against measles, the lack of a corresponding rise in autism suggested that if MMR does cause the Wakefield syndrome, it does so "extremely rarely".

'Flapdoodle'



Rotten Boroughs



"One day, son, all this will be yours... at a very reasonable price"

Burgher King

ONLY one man is having a worse time than John Prescott at the hands of Hull's in-fighting Labour party: his big pal John Black, city councillor and former lord mayor.

Evidence has found its way to local hacks claiming to reveal that Black rigged selection meetings to help chums on the council. He apparently persuaded staff at West Hull amateur rugby club to give him a list of members' names, and then enrolled the members and their partners by filling out their applications and paying their block subscriptions, sometimes without their knowledge.

Black let it be known he wanted them to attend key selection meetings where his allies were standing. At one meeting the rugby players attended and voted out a senior councillor in place of county councillor Steve Wilson — an ally of Black's.

Like Prescott, Black dismissed the allegations as "a conspiracy theory which would make a good

Lambeth

CHANNEL 4's *Cutting Edge* showed Lambeth council chief executive Heather Rabbatts declaring war on council corruption. Not that this will have cheered those who live in tower blocks in the London borough.

Rabbatts has decided it is too expensive to hold an independent inquiry into the disaster at Kerrin Point, the skyscraper that blew up last July injuring 11 people. So far the blast and ensuing rehousing have cost local taxpayers £2m — not that those affected have seen much value for money.

Kerrin Point residents who had complained about the boiler for more than a decade and then lost their homes in the blast were quickly rehoused in cockroach-infested slums in Norwood. Meanwhile the council has secretly audited its clapped-out boilers — and covered up its findings. At least 50 were in far from full working order, and one boiler exploded on an estate in Stockwell, injuring a woman.

The presence of faulty equipment may be completely unrelated, however, to the sub-contracting scam whereby hundreds of unregistered and unqualified plumbers were paid over the odds to fit the council's central heating systems. Some of these systems have since emitted carbon monoxide, while the central heating on the Tenwith estate in Vauxhall had to be switched off at the height of winter leaving thousands freezing.

Locals will however be pleased to know that the building design services department, which is responsible for boiler maintenance and went to Kerrin Point 120 times in the six months before the blast, has been abolished.

PS: Despite looming elections Lambeth Labour councillor Charles Fairbank has been forced to resign for having council flats in both Lambeth and Hull. He denied he sublet his Lambeth flat on the Loughborough estate, but a canvasser who called during the general election was surprised to be greeted by a man who said he was the tenant and that Fairbank was nearly always in Hull.

Gwynedd

FORMER terrorist Owain Williams has joined Labour and been accepted in the party's official group on Gwynedd council.

Williams, elected as an independent nationalist, was convicted for blowing up a transformer at Cwm Celyn in the 1960s. He was connected to the now defunct Free Wales Army, and was fiercely critical of the investiture of Prince Charles as the Prince of Wales. He has often called for inward migration to Wales to be checked through legislation, and he lives on the remote Llyn Peninsular where 80 percent speak Welsh as a first language.

Plaid Cymru will be glad to see the back of him as he has often criticised its constitutional methods. How he will square his views with those of arch monarchist Tony Blair, who believes passionately in the UK, remains to be seen.

Murkeyside

IT HAS literally been fun and games in notorious Knowsley where councillors have asked the district auditor to investigate the relationship between council officers and Swedish-based playground manufacturer Hags Play Ltd.

Trouble started when Tower Hill Community Association in Kirkby awarded Hags the contract to build a new playground. It had had £43,000 of national lottery money, and Hags' bid was for £42,997.58 — said by one critic to be "a remarkably accurate piece of tendering".

The association treasurer told Hags to do the work in preference to two other firms after consulting two council officers — one of whom was Ms Sarah Atkin. Roughly six months later Atkin went on a four-day trip to Sweden with Knowsley's assistant chief executive David McElhinney — hotel, meals and air travel paid by Hags.

The July trip, which involved a visit to the Hags factory, was passed off as a "study tour" giving the officers a chance "to study the Swedish approach to public space management". Evidently more study was needed in September when two other Knowsley officers, Mr R. McDonnell and Ms Linda Retching, also spent four days in Sweden courtesy of Hags.

Internal investigations have revealed that officers in Knowsley's leisure services department broke down orders for Hags equipment into sums of less than £20,000, which meant they were not subject to formal tender. The report concluded that "there is no evidence one way or another to confirm the view that the Association was forced to use Hags Play" and dismissed the affair as an error of judgement. But councillors have now taken a different view.

Red Face of the Week

HART district Tory councillor Peter Hutcheson, a former council leader, has been banned from driving for a year and fined £300, plus £45 costs, by Aldershot magistrates for drink driving. He was stopped by police having just attended... a road safety meeting at the council offices in Fleet, Hampshire.

Hutcheson claims a political opponent tipped off police who used CCTV cameras to watch him get in his car and make the short drive home. It was Hutcheson who spoke so vehemently against security cameras being introduced in the town centre. He is now resisting public calls to resign from the road safety committee.

Islington

LIBRARY users will remember how Labour-controlled Islington was "forced" to close St Luke's library in Finsbury last November because of a chronic shortage of funds. (The closure came during Libraries Week which had been launched by the area's MP, culture secretary Chris Smith.)

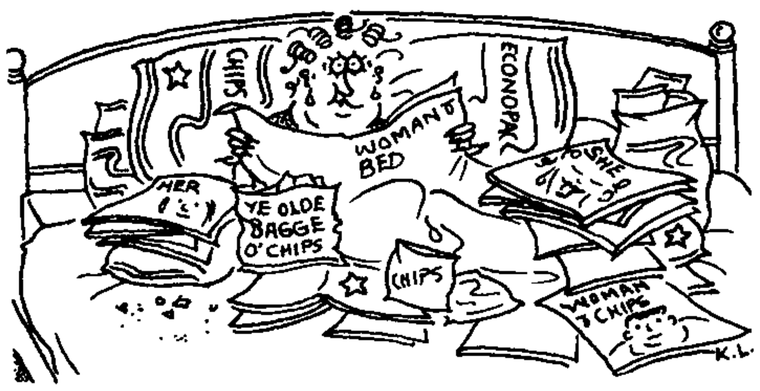
For just £111,000 Islington could keep St Luke's open for another year, after which money could be found from other budgets to keep it going. Unfortunately there is no more money, which makes it all the more surprising that the council has found funds to back the next annual instalment of the Islington International Festival, whose attractions include a 90-second musical score for 11 cyclists blowing their horns, a man in a motorised pram and animal sculptures made from household junk. The council's donation to the festival? £111,000.

Pseuds Corner

Very much a design object, a construction feat, the Angel (Michael Gormley's The Angel of the North) commands attention and respect. Its impersonality will, in the end, tell in its favour. Already, before it has even settled in, it has been relaying a benign indent. Obviously it's the Angel at the Gate, and if that image is redundant then others kick in.

There it stands, an almighty flasher, some say. Or maybe a scorekeeper holding a dummy electronic signboard (hazards ahead). Or a spirit level communing with high horizons. Part of the attraction of this exemplary public sculpture is that it is so big and yet, in context, so small after all.

WILLIAM FEAVER
Observer



Sometimes I wake up and have potato chips in bed. Not plain, but barbecue or ketchup or whatever. Sometimes I read fashion magazines. I don't really read books: there's not enough space in my life. When I have an empty space in my brain, it's cool, it's okay. I don't want to fill it with anything.

CELINE DION
Sunday Times Magazine

The house contains the bathroom. The bathroom contains the bath. The bath contains the woman. The woman contains all kinds of meditations, memories, daydreams. Egg within egg within egg. Her husband, who loves her, paints her waiting for something. Perhaps for the pain to stop. Sometimes her thoughts scratch at her so much that only the water's caress will do, licking at her like the tips of brushes. The water paints her all over with peace. It's a treat, this bathing, and perhaps a form of treatment too. To be held in the water's arms. To forget herself, go out of herself, merge with the cool water and the hot light.

MICHÈLE ROBERTS
"A response to Bonnard" in "Tate", the Tate Gallery Magazine

My mother lives in the medieval Norfolk market town of King's Lynn which crouches grandly around the mucky river Ouse like an exceptionally fine cold sore upon the lips of a feisty old whore.

NICOLA BARKER
Observer

Other highlights include the actress Winona Ryder duetting with America's latest sweetheart, Calista Flockheart, the cute-as-a-button star of the new hit TV show Ali McBeal. The two will recreate an account of rape in Bosnia with lines like "My vagina a live wet water village. They invaded it, butchered and burnt it down."

Susan Sarandon will report on giving birth: "I was there when her vagina changed from a shy sexual hole to an archaeological tunnel, a sacred vessel, a Venetian canal, a deep well with a tiny child inside." Glenn Close is expected to bring the house down by "reclaiming" probably the most offensive four-letter word of them all. Her re-hearsal, says the author, was "so brilliant, so outrageous, so daring".

Daily Telegraph account of 'V Day'

CONTRIBUTORS: Paul Collinson, Roger Smith, William Hewison, Jane Teather, M. Cardoni.

£10 paid for entries

'Superteacher' gets a costume

LIBEL NEWS

WINNING a million-pound legal action against Granada TV prompted Sir Richard Greenbury to say he was proud to be chairman of Marks & Spencer, "with its traditions of caring and straight-dealing. Our good name is our greatest asset and we will always take firm action to protect our reputation."

Despite this boast M&S has not always rushed to defend its reputation against hacks who report on the company's importing and mislabelling problems.

It took no action against the *Sindie* for reporting, on 9 August 1992: "Marks and Spencer is selling Serbian-made shirts and blouses to British schoolchildren — despite the UN trade embargo and worldwide condemnation of the Serbian regime."

Nor against the *Daily Star*, on 11 August 1992, for saying that shadow foreign secretary Robin Cook was trying to stop "M&S Buying Shirts From Brutal Serbs".

Nor against the *Financial Times*, on 13 August 1992, for saying M&S was buying clothing from Genex, a firm "controlled by Slobodan Milosevic".

Nor against the *Sindie*, for reporting on 3 January 1993, under the headline "Customs Hold Cargo of M&S Shirts", that "last summer, after a row about M&S selling children's shirts made up in Serbia by a firm controlled by the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, an M&S spokesman, David Sieff, said the company would not be 'sourcing' goods in Serbia again."

Nor against the *Eye*, when we reported in January 1993 that "Three lorries carrying 42,000 shirts for M&S arrived in Hull on 30 December, 1992, and were immediately impounded by customs acting on a tip-off from Labour MP Dale Campbell-Savours. The first curious thing customs officers discovered was that, in spite of coming from the former Yugoslavia, some of the shirts bore 'Made in England' labels."

Nor against a long-distance lorry driver from Wigan who wrote down his phone number, screwed up the paper and lobbed it over the wire to a journalist, just before customs discovered that one in every five of the shirts loaded on his trailer in Macedonia, for M&S supplier I.J. Dewhirst, was carrying a Made In England label. The driver's briefing notes for the M&S run said: "Destroy any paperwork relating, showing Serbian factory and on carnets, when stamped by Hungarians, get page torn out. Drivers must not tell anyone that these shirts are from Serbia. All and everything from Ohrid, Macedonia."

O·B·N

Discussing the HarperCollins row with a journalist friend the other day, we agreed that anti-Murdochism performs for our age what anti-Semitism did for a previous one. It unites both sides of the ideological divide in hatred of a single totem. Anti-Semitism, like anti-Murdochism, allowed the Left to personalise their hatred of capitalism and the Right to claim they were standing up for civilisation.

MATTHEW PARRIS
Spectator

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Letters

Private Eye

Mr Nice Guy

Sir,

The fact that your organ can exercise its right to savage Mr Murdoch at every opportunity can only mean that he's not as evil as the EYE *tries to make him out to be.*

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I can't seem to recall the EYE *having to come grovelling to its readers for a donation to save being closed down by Murdoch.*

Yours,
INGRID TOYE,

Chester.

Pupil power

Sir,

Paul Foot's allegations are true. When I was Ed Lawson's pupil I distinctly remember him acting for police officers, as well as prosecuting alleged fraudsters, cross examining police officers on the basis that they had told lies and acting for some of the families involved in the Herald of Free Enterprise tragedy. I regret that Lawson misled me into believing that barristers ought to take cases without fear or favour.

However, I now realise the error of my ways and will ensure that all future entries in professional directories confirm that I take cases on the basis of my own and Paul Foot's political beliefs only.

With that in mind can I offer my entry in the Paul Foot tie-breaker competition: "I would be the best counsel for the Stephen Lawrence inquiry because... reaching conclusions before hearing any evidence is the best way to secure a just and credible result" (17 words).

I don't think Paul Foot is a barrister, and it's still a closed shop, so can I have the job?

Yours in hope,
SIMON MYERSON,

Leeds.

Fan male

Sir,

Mohamed Al-Fayed may be fat, dishonest and a bully. But you cannot fault his business acumen in buying Fulham FC, now challenging for promotion for the second successive season. Which, then, is the "second-rate football club" you claim he owns? Please clarify your statement... or justify this foul slur on a team which, after years of mediocrity, is now flaunting with success.

Your deeply hurt fan,
PAUL NEWMAN,

Gerrards Cross, Bucks.

An agony aunt writes...

Sir,

I notice in my column in your newspaper last week I referred to some newspapers which pay £1,000 for 500 words. I have stupidly lost my list of editors who will pay such a sum, and would be grateful if you could jog my memory as to who they are, please.

Yours,

ANNE ATKINS,
c/o David Higham Associates.

Rights and wrongs

Sir,

I note that in your issue of 6 March (page eight) you refer to the ennobled Jimmy Gordon — Lord Gordon of Strathblane — as a "staunch Thatcherite". Surely this cannot be the same Jimmy Gordon who stood for parliament at least once on behalf of the Labour party. When did he desert the Labour party?

I note that on page 14 of the same issue, you refer to Lord Irvine as a Glaswegian. Are you sure? Glasgow University — perhaps — Glaswegian surely not.

On page 15 a letter refers to my home town of Stirling as a city. Sorry, wrong again to your correspondent.

JOHN J. MONAGHAN,

Via e-mail.

Food for thought

Sir,

Re: the BSE/CJD link and the failure of a CJD epidemic to appear as predicted (EYE *944).*

A factor which seems to have been overlooked is that only CJD occurring in young people is newsworthy, but then what happens to the rest?

During the course of my work within the NHS in 1996, I was informed that, at one time, seven people with new-variant CJD were being cared for on one ward in my local hospital. These people were in the late middle age to elderly range and I was told at the same time that diagnostic testing relevant to CJD had been stopped.

So, perhaps the epidemic is developing after all.

Yours sincerely,
DERRICK HALE,

Littleover, Derby.

What's up, doc?

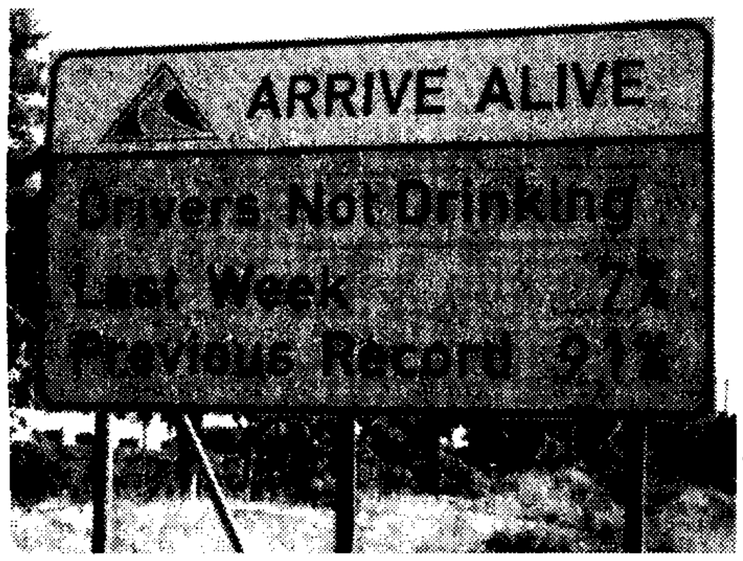
Sir,

Square Eyes noted a few weeks ago ITV's frustration at THE BILL *losing audience-wise to cheap BBC fly-on-the-wall documentaries. It is fascinating that ITV has now displaced* THE BILL *on Fridays to make way for er... a fly-on-the-wall documentary. Why-oh-why can't television schedulers come up with something original?*

Yours sincerely,
ALAN MAGRATH,

Croydon.

I-SPY *Stellenbosch, S. Africa*



Submitted by Paul Braithwaite. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

No memory man

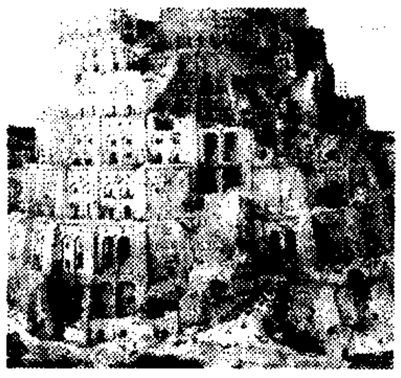
Sir,

Having myself once had a serious car crash which results in me having no memory of the subsequent events, and still no clear memory five years later, the memories I did remember at the time were those "told to me" by the police, press reports, family etc. The reasons for my accident were never fully understood so the interested parties involved chose a story that fitted the facts as they saw them. It is then with some amusement that I now see from the MIRROR *that Trevor Rees-Jones can now start to remember certain events. Remember, he did spend a week in a coma. Could these be the same "events" that a certain paper, enthusiastic boss, loony fringe would like him to believe or those just simply made to fit the facts repeated every day? Hum! You choose.*

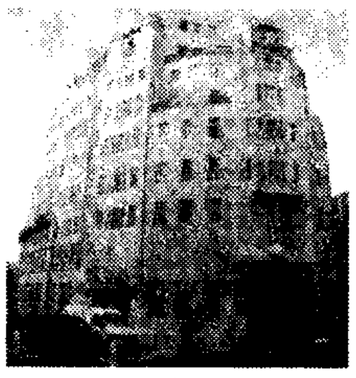
ANDREW KENDALL,

Via e-mail.

Lookalike



BBC



Babel

Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers have noticed the similarity between the BBC (Nation shall speak peace unto Nation) and the Tower of Babel (Nation shall speak gibberish unto Nation)?

Yours sincerely,
DAVID ROBSON,

Leeds.

In a spin

Sir,

As a spin doctor I am often asked "Why do mistakes appear in print so often?" The answer is "lack-of-fact-checking-itis".

Remarkably, all clinicians agree that preventative action works and recommend a daily intake of "half-a-nanosecond's-research".

Recent outbreaks of this disease include EYE *945 when I suffered collateral damage. I left the DfEE as its resident spin consultant entirely of my own volition for a more rewarding job. No question of being pushed out by Peter Mandelson as claimed.*

So what restoratives do we doctors suggest? Very often the payment of substantial damages will restore health to the victim. In this case, and as a confirmed EYE *addict for more than 20 years, a cheap bottle of champagne will probably do — subject, of course, to the editor's heading to this letter!*

Yours sincerely,
JONATHAN HASLAM,

Beckenham, Kent.

Jury verdict

Sir,

With reference to Roy Dent's letter in EYE *945. I've had the misfortune to be called for jury service twice now and have served on four juries. In each case some of the other jury members were so brainless it was a wonder that they could walk and breathe at the same time. I watched as one chap accused of a form of fraud was sent down for two years after a majority verdict simply because ten of the jury members couldn't understand the concept of being "not guilty AS CHARGED" as opposed to being "guilty of something".*

In another case, one juror made an obviously enlightened comment to the effect that the accused must have been guilty "because the police said he was and they wouldn't tell a lie"... the facts that there were no corroborative eyewitness accounts and the authenticity of the material evidence was questionable seemed to make no difference, possibly due to the judge's constant interruptions during defence cross examination of police officers, and the police/CPS almost won the day (the case was undecided and went to retrial)...

Treble figure IQs all round?
I think not.

Regards,
MARK SOMERTON,

Via e-mail.

LUVVIES

"It's the first time I've been on stage for 15 years... I was so scared it was literally like going in front of a firing squad."

BOB HOSKINS on *Parkinson*

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Chu on this

Sir,

Re "Why Oh Wyeth" (4 March 1998). I was interested to read your article about Dr Tony Chu, the Acne Support Group and Minocin.

Dr Chu and the ASG have done most valuable work in bringing to public attention the fact that acne, a condition which causes untold misery to its sufferers, and occasionally even leads to suicide, can now be effectively treated.

I would profoundly disagree with him that "other leading British dermatologists dealing with acne had never seen a single case of the side effects exposed by the BMJ *article." I for one have seen such a case in my own clinical practice which has had very severe long term consequences for the affected individual. The link with Minocin was only appreciated after the* BMJ *article, and I for one have not prescribed this drug since in patients with acne, since in my own opinion there are usually effective alternatives not associated with these specific hazards.*

Yours faithfully,
DR BARRY MONK, MA, FRCP,

Consultant Dermatologist, Harley Street, W1.

The right to moan

Sir,

In EYE *945 you claim that the minister for international development George Foulkes is MP for "difficult to pronounce Carrick Cunnock and Doon Valley". He is not, instead he is MP for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. I hope the "m" aids your pronunciation.*

There was another error in the same issue. You commented that the ratepayers of Hyde Park might object to "lending" the park to the countryside marchers who oppose the right to roam. In fact, Hyde Park is not a municipal park, it is a royal park which means the "ratepayers" are the British taxpayers from Shetland to Cornwall. Thus the marchers were only using their own park instead of merely subsidising the residents of the London boroughs of Kensington and Westminster.

ROBERT LAURIE,

London N4.

Black marks & Spencer

Sir,

I notice that Earl Spencer has approved the selling of souvenirs at Althorp, despite his previous reference to Diana souvenirs as "tacky". If you can't beat them join them, so might I suggest that he produces a T-shirt along the lines of "My girlfriend visited Diana's grave and all I got was this lousy T-shirt."

Yours,
ALAN BENTLEY,

Via e-mail.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Question: *Who is the current editor of Private Eye?*
Contestant: *Bernard Ingham.*
15 To One, Channel 4
(Sara Moloney)

"...they've done the old-fashioned things well; they've kicked the ball, they've headed it..."
RON ATKINSON, ITV
(Indecipherable)

"You can't do better than go away from home and get a draw..."
KEVIN KEEGAN, ITV
(Indecipherable)

"So it's Mexico, Mexico, Mexico. Speaking of Mexico, here's a piece from Brazil."
HENRY KELLY, Classic FM
(Geoff Wyburn)

"Lombardo speaks much better English than what people realise."
Mark Goldman (Crystal Palace FC owner)
(Robert Bathurst)

HOM SAP BY DAVID AUSTIN

FUNNY OLD WORLD

● "Everyone should be aware that it is not a good idea to buy cheap electrical equipment from the back of a Transit van travelling round the Forest of Dean," said Sergeant Robert Vesty of the Forest force in a warning to householders. "And a number of people have rung us over the past fortnight with regard to one particular scam.

"What happens is that these salesmen in their Transit van show customers a Sony TV in perfect working order, and at a very cheap

price. They insist on cash, give the customers a large cardboard box with a brick in it and the word 'Sony' handwritten on the outside, and then drive off. By the time the customer gets the box inside their house and opens it, it's too late. We've had dozens of complaints, and the problem could be much worse than we think, because we suspect most people would feel so stupid at having been conned in such an obvious way that they won't report the crime. It is a real worry." *(The Citizen 4/2/98. Spotter: Trevor Ingram)*

—●—

● "I only intended to kick his hand, but I accidentally kicked his head," monk Ng Wing-fai told magistrate David Duggan at the San Po Kong Court in Hong Kong. "Yes, it's true, I did kick him thirty-six times in total, but I assure you that the assault was in no way intentional."

Ng Wing-fai, a thirty-year-old Buddhist monk whose religious vows include the renunciation of violence and of all worldly possessions, explained to the magistrate how the assault had taken place. "Last Tuesday, I set off from Guandong monastery to take up my usual begging position outside the Wong Tai Sin Taoist Temple. Tens of thousands of people had gathered there to celebrate the festival of Yan Yat, and I felt I was assured of a full begging bowl that morning. Imagine my horror when I reached the temple and found that this man had stolen my place, and was already sitting there, begging. He was making a fortune and it should have been my money. When I questioned him, I soon discovered that he was not even a proper monk, just a common pauper begging. At first, I stood next to him with my bowl held out and tried to ignore him, but he kept tugging at my robe and trying to put me off as I begged. That is when I tripped and my foot slipped and started kicking out, due to a nervous condition. Although I had only intended to overturn his bowl, I regret that he ended up needing fourteen stitches."

The monk was fined $1,000 plus $300 costs, and bound over to keep the peace for a year. *(South China Morning Post, 11/1/98. Spotter: C. Macdonald)*

—●—

● *"Samson Shore may only have one arm and one leg, but he has the strength of ten men," District Commissioner Sam Ojuang told reporters in Marsabit. "Two of my officers were on a night patrol of the bar area of the town at 3:30am when they saw Shore, moving along on his crutch in a suspicious manner. He had obviously been drinking, but when they told him to stop, he refused.*

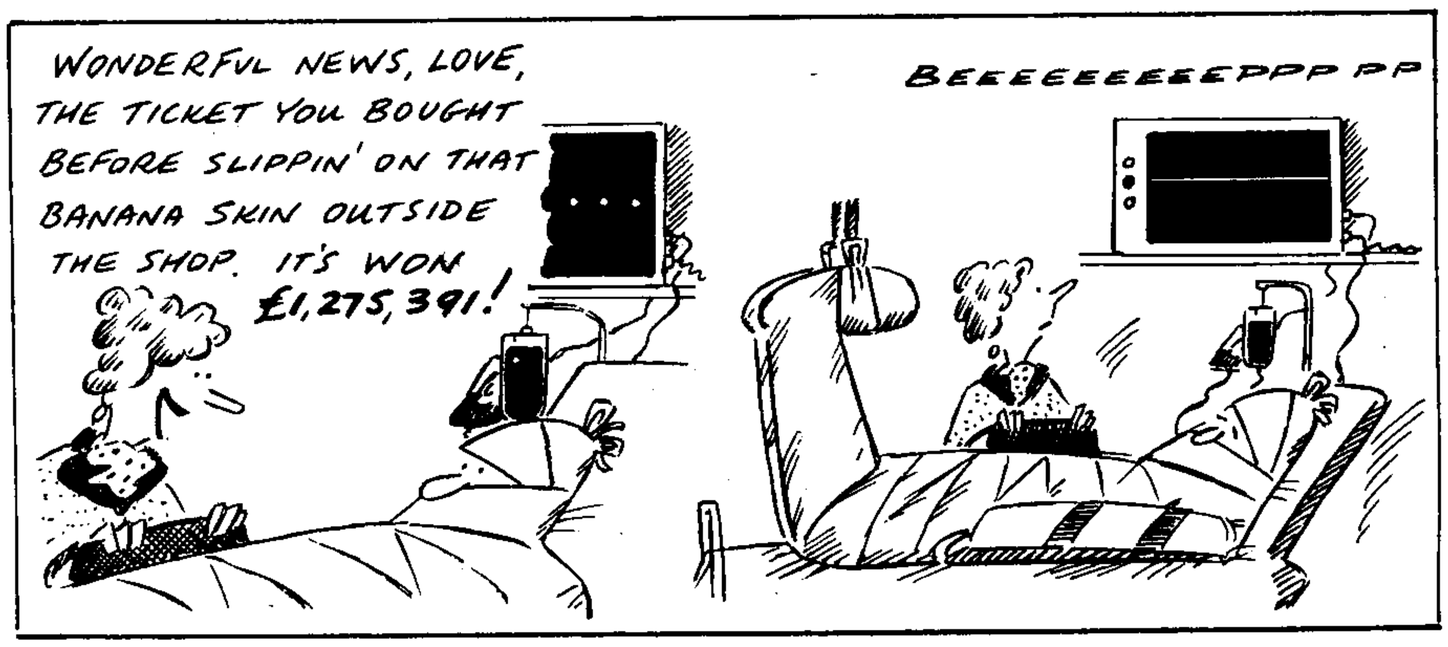
"Naturally, my officers regarded this as insolence, so they took out their pistols and prepared to shoot him. But he suddenly lashed out at one of them with his crutch, sending him sprawling to the ground. Then he spun round and grabbed the other officer's pistol, leaving them both completely helpless. After that, he made the officers kneel down and crawl on their knees all the back to the police station, while saluting him, calling him Afande [Sir], whistling the national anthem, and kissing his bottom as he hobbled along in front of them. When they finally reached the station, Shore came inside and handed the pistol over to me.

"My officers' trousers are all ruined at the knees, and they have nasty grazes too, so we shall be charging Mr Shore with criminal damage, as well as with bringing the dignity of the law into disrepute. He told us he had been watching a television programme called 'Charlie's Angels' and I think it may well have turned his head." (Kenya Standard 31/1/98. Spotter: M. Dowling)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

The Lottery Winners

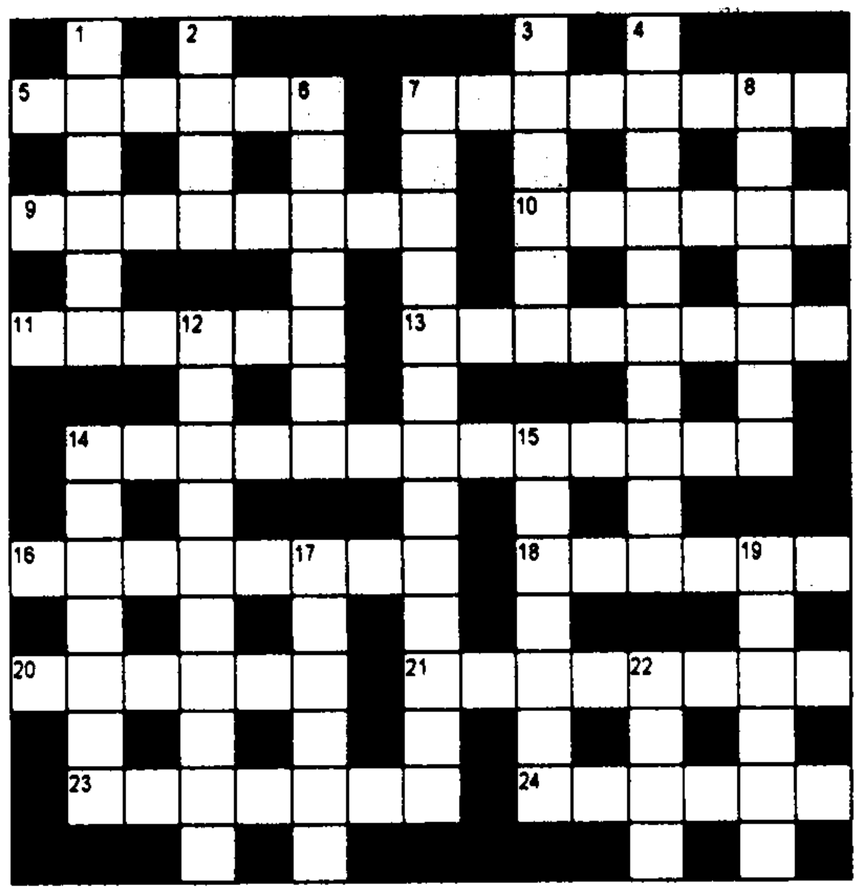
TURNER


WONDERFUL NEWS, LOVE, THE TICKET YOU BOUGHT BEFORE SLIPPIN' ON THAT BANANA SKIN OUTSIDE THE SHOP. IT'S WON £1,275,391!
BEEEEEEEEEEPPP PP

EYE CROSSWORD 101

by Cyclops

£100 prize



ACROSS

5 Divine gives Jeremy's end a jerk (6)
7 To go in for female pursuits make yourself more feminine (8)
9 The PM has depth — next to Netanyahu, possibly (8)
10 Natural party members? Vegetables! (6)
11 Well-known leftie helping get Boateng elsewhere (6)
13 One and only party leader's seat of government (3,5)
14 Stay alert like Cyclops: don't allow the closing up of organ indefinitely! (4,2,3,4)
16 China boobs at the start, getting intimate (5,3)
18 Queer thing has kinky sex with youth (6)
20 Foreign player to indulge in intercourse (6)
21 It's beneath a certain lordly arse (8)
23 Applying pitch to Brenda's dog (7)
24 Gutless, like a newspaper that's suffered too much exposure? (6)

DOWN

1 Irish girl swallows your short tongue (6)
2 It's cooler to move about (4)
3 One fleeing his country before being poetic about aircraft? (6)
4 Subjected to a joint attack by terrorists? (4-6)
6 Issue dear to Clinton — and Mellor (7)
7 Referee who gives the game away? (7-6)
8 Tabloid gets Brook a severe tanning (7)
12 Day before vote on a way to get an outstanding figure in journalism (3,7)
14 Ken, utter smart-arse (4-3)
15 Hardly first class, Gordon's responsibility (7)
17 Church surrounded by foreign spy ring — a shocking feature, this (6)
19 Maxwell: heavyweight awfully coy at heart? (6)
22 In brief, old money confused with new money by this party (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 27.03.98. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 100

Winner: Carol Dawson

ACROSS: 1 One hundredth 9 Five score 10 Navel 11 Royal 12 Authority 13 Martini 15 Regions 17 Eye Hear 19 Conifer 21 Wimbledon 23 Ton-up 25 Ratio 26 Cruelties 27 Charley's Aunt.

DOWN: 2 Navvy 3 Heseltine 4 Neo-nazi 5 Re-enter 6 Dingo 7 Have it off 8 Lloyds 9 Forum 14 Rheumatic 16 Genitalia 17 Edward 18 Radical 19 Century 20 Ropes 22 L-dopa 24 Nairn.

SOCCER

FURY AT SEX 'N' SLEAZE

by **E.I. Erewego,** Our Man At The Anthony Caro Exhibition Clutching The Collected Poems Of Radio 4's Michael Horowitz

THE soccer world was rocked to its foundations yesterday following tabloid press revelations that Neasden soccer supremos had enjoyed booze and sex romps in the luxurious £27-a-night Hammersmith Novotel.

Manager Ron Knee, 59, and Chairman Sir Buffy Cohen, the Launderama magnate, booked in under the names of B. Cohen and R. Knee.

The two men went on a disgusting rampage, raiding the minibar and watching adult entertainment on the hotel's dedicated Over-18 channel.

Own goal

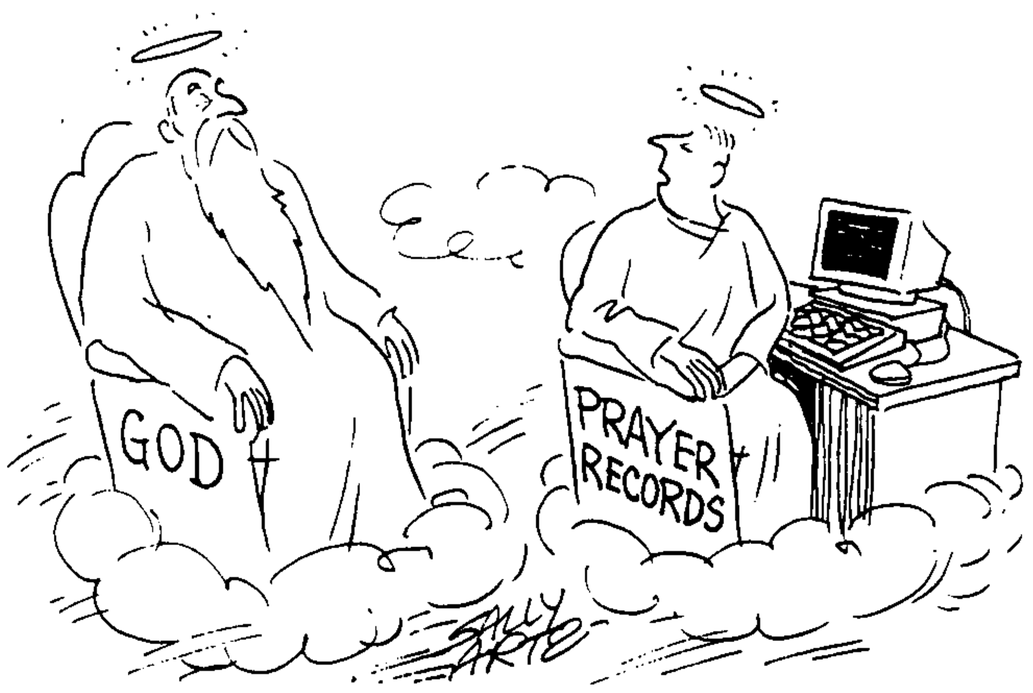
Neasden fans, Sid and Doris Bonkers, were shocked by the news.

"This is typical of our management. They have let down the club very badly. Why can't they have a mass orgy with naked bimbos like proper soccer bosses? These two are pathetic."

LATE SCORE

Neasden F.C. 3
Manchester United 0

(Shurely shome mistake? Ed.)



"Save the Ozone Layer" 3, "Let me find a parking slot" 1,954...

ST CAKES 'NOT ELITIST' SAY INSPECTORS

by Our Education Staff
Mr Micro Chips

TOP Midlands public school St Cakes (motto "Quis donat entrat" -"Who pays gets in") has been praised by an official report for its "non-elitist character".

The £28,000-a-term boarding school is described by inspectors as "open, friendly, relaxed and classless".

Said headmaster Mr Kipling: "I am delighted by the report. St Cakes has always been open to anyone. We are not snobbish in the slightest. On the contrary, our principles are entirely egalitarian. We allow entry to anyone irrespective of colour, class or creed — but we do draw the line at poverty."

Mr Kipling makes exceedingly large amounts of money.

New-Look Radio Bore

An at-a-glance guide to the radio station that's really going places (downmarket).

A DRAMATIC shake-up in Radio 4 schedules, the biggest since last week, has provoked a storm of protest amongst hard-core Radio Four listeners (Sir Herbert and Lady Laetitia Gusset, Co-Chair of The Dorset Countryside Alliance Committee).

Long-running programmes to face the axe include:

- **"Does He Eat Toast?"**
- **"The Toast Programme"**
- **"Medium Toast"**
- **"Your Toast Tonight"**
- **"The Toast Quiz"**

Controversial new programmes include:

- **The Toast File**
- **Down Your Toast**
- **Sport on Toast (with Martin Bashir)**
- **Afternoon Toast**
- **Desert Island Toast.**

(That's enough of this feature. Ed.)

COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales last night received Lady Camilla Parker-Bowles into his private apartments. She was accompanied by two overnight bags and a number of toilet requisites. There was a formal legover followed by the ceremonial smoking of a cigarette.

The Prince was attended by Sir Alan Fitztightly, the Master of the Royal Revels and Keeper of the Something For The Weekend.

TODAY PRESENTER IN 'BACKGROUND NOISE' ROW

by Our Radio Staff
Sinead Muzak

PROTESTS are growing over the proliferation of irritating background noise emanating from BBC veteran John Humphrys' mouth.

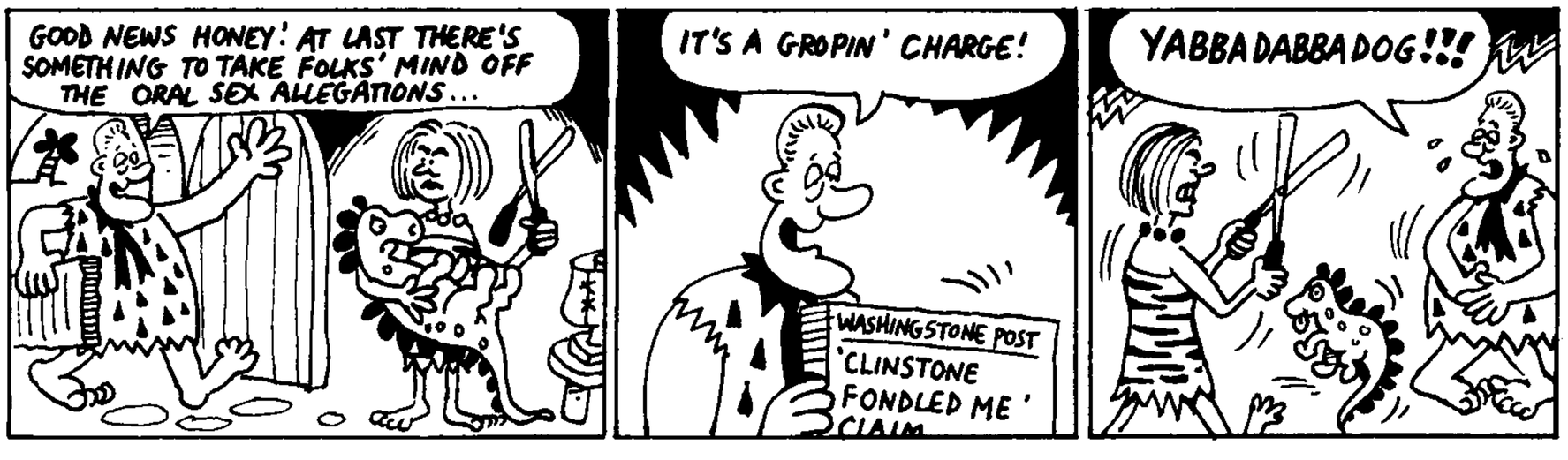
"It's everywhere," said one furious campaigner. "In your bedroom, in the car, in the office. You can't get away from this low droning sound going on and on with questions about John Prescott and El Niño."

John Humphrys is 94KHz.

Pupils train as counsellors to help upset classmates

The Times

MEET THE CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY


GOOD NEWS HONEY! AT LAST THERE'S SOMETHING TO TAKE FOLKS' MIND OFF THE ORAL SEX ALLEGATIONS...
IT'S A GROPIN' CHARGE!
WASHINGSTONE POST
'CLINSTONE FONDLED ME' CLAIM
YABBADABBADOG!!!

The Times Guide To Sleep
(adapted from the best-selling book "Z-z-z-z" by Dr Stothardford)

Pt. 94: How to get a good night's sleep

1. Purchase copy of Times (20p on Monday).
2. Open at any page.
3. Start reading.
4. Hey presto — you're asleep!
5. Z-z-z-z...

© *The China Daily*

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Dearly beloved brethren — only joking!

That sort of out-of-date mumbo-jumbo has no place in the modern new world of St Albion's today!

That's the message coming loud and clear from our house focus groups, organised by Mrs Dee Moss, that have been meeting over Lent to point the way forward for the parish!

These are the things you don't want any more (and quite right too, since you all ticked the right boxes on my questionnaire!):

- time-wasting rituals and processions which are meaningless to the young people of today
- dressing up in ridiculous robes which date back to the Middle Ages
- talking in high-flown language — what I call the "verily, verily syndrome". They don't talk like that on *Eastenders* or *The Full Monty*!

Look, what we've got to do is get rid of all this stuff!

That's why when I preach a sermon you may have noticed that I take my jacket off and wander around the nave — or "middle bit" as it should be called!

And that's why we've got rid of the organ, grinding out dreary 19th century hymns written by stuffy old Victorians who had no idea what the modern world is about.

"And did those feet in ancient time" — we don't want to know about ancient times, thank you very much!

We want modern feet, tapping to a modern beat, like the one I played on the guitar on Sunday, which I am sure you are going to pick up very quickly, after a few more tries (and some of you could try a bit harder!).

Here it is:

There's a new wind blowing
A cool wind blowing.
Blow cool wind on me (repeat)

©Words and Music by Rev. A.R.P. Blair

And while we're on the subject of popular music, may I register my disappointment at some of the comments which have come back to me from last Saturday's Youth Club Disco.

I gather that various members of the groups who were playing, including *The Sniffers*, *The Fuggy-Fuggies*, *Tampax Crisis* and *Mad Junkie*, went out of their way to be rude about me.

They said that I was trying to curry favour with the young people of the parish by inviting some of them to the vicarage for sherry, and attending their "gigs". Apparently someone even shouted "Get lost Grandad!"

Look, this is pretty ungrateful, after all I have done for them, by inviting them into my house and listening to their music!

I even lent them my amplifier! Honestly!

The trouble with the young people of today is that they have no appreciation for all the traditional values of politeness, good manners and respect for their elders.

These things don't go out of date, you know!

Yours,

Tony

● Kidz Korner ●

The St Albion's primary school reception class have spent this term working on their "Royal Prayer Project" to produce a new modern prayer for the Queen. The winning entry, from Barbara Follett (age 6) is printed below:

Dear God, look down from
on high
And make the queen more
like Princess Di.
Amen

YOU WRITE. . . . . .

From Mr Bob Marshall-Andrews and 49 other parishioners

Dear Sir,

We would like to protest at the role played by Mr Lairg as legal adviser to the PCC. Just because he is a close personal friend of Tony's does not mean that he has any right to

Yours sincerely
Robert Marshall-Andrews QC

The Editor reserves the right to curtail correspondence for reasons of space.
Alistair Campbell.

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr Prescott, who is having a very difficult time down at the Working Men's Club. There have been a lot of very unpleasant allegations about John and his son Jonathan, made by people who can't accept the new way of doing things at St Albion's. Remember, as the Good Book says, "Be not judgemental, lest others be judgemental about you."

(Revelations About John, 7.3)

Everyone **must** *join in the chorus!*

Notices

■ The title of **Mr Cook**'s "China: The Evil Empire" has been changed to "Our Friends The Chinese". Tickets still available.

■ From now on people will no longer be allowed to park cars free in the Church forecourt. There will now be a small charge of £10 to encourage people to use public transport (although at present there is none available).

■ Congratulations to **Mrs Mowlam** on her organisation of the St Patrick's Day service. We haven't had fireworks in church before, but it all seemed very exciting. In fact, **Mrs Mowlam** has done such a splendid job of running the mission to Belfast that the vicar has decided to step in and take charge himself!

■ **Mr Foster's** talk on "The Evils of Fox Hunting" has been cancelled once again due to lack of time. The vicar was of course very keen on the talk, but sadly he was too busy to fit it into his schedule. (Sorry — perhaps we can rearrange it soon, say in ten years' time! T.B.)

Exclusive

Queen's Proposals For New-Look Royals

BY OUR COURT STAFF KENNETH ROSEWITHOUTTRACE

THE most radical shake-up of the monarchy in 2000 years has been proposed by the Royal Family in response to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales™.

Following last year's barrage of criticism that the Royal Family was "out of touch", "anachronistic" and "stuck in a medieval time warp", the Queen has personally initiated a series of "drastic" and "radical" moves to bring the monarchy "into the 21st Century".

Those Shock Changes In Full

1. The Union Flag will fly above Buckingham Palace on alternate Wednesdays to give tourists something to photograph.

2. Those meeting the Queen below the rank of Marquess will no longer be required to walk backwards for more than 15 paces.

3. A major shake-up in the official Order of Precedence will result in the younger daughters of an Earl no longer taking automatic precedence over bishops who do not serve in the House of Lords.

4. The honorific title of Princess will be withdrawn from Fergie's ghastly children, whatever their names are.

5. Er...

6. ...that's it.

Blair's Proposals For New-Look Royals

BY OUR POLITICAL STAFF ALISTAIR CAMPBELL

MR TONY Blair has personally authorised a number of minor reforms intended to "modernise" the image of the Royal Family, to bring it more into line with the needs of a vibrant, pivotal country recovering from the trauma of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales™.

The "Blair Reforms" have been drawn up following consultation with focus groups in all parts of the country (Islington).

Those Minor Changes In Full

1. Royal Family to travel by bicycle only, except for State Opening of Parliament when Queen may be permitted to use public transport.

2. Prime Minister and wife to take precedence over Royalty at all official functions.

3. The weekly "audience" with the Prime Minister to be held in future at 10, Downing Street (Queen to attend on foot).

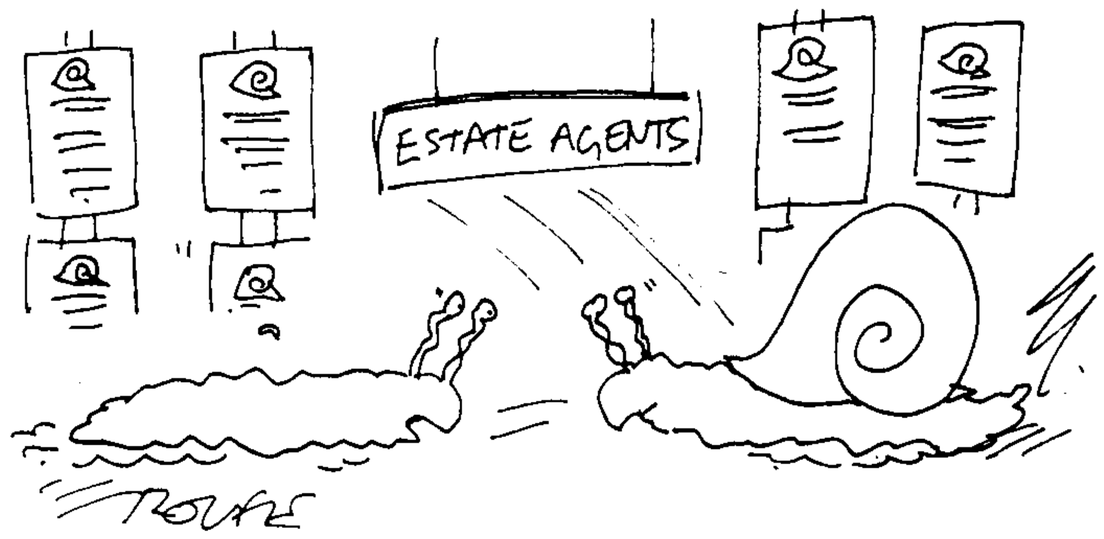
4. Royal Corgis to be fed on Kwik Save Doggo-chunks (27p) to bring them into line with Dutch Royal dogs.

5. Royal art collection to be rehoused in the apartments of Lord Lairg, to bring it into line with all other public collections.

6. Buckingham Palace to be bulldozed to bring it into line with the ground.

7. Royal Family to be shot in Bolshevik-style atrocity in Forest of Windsor.

"James has given up smoking recently!"



"I'm a first-time buyer..."

HUGE ASTEROID HITS HEADLINE

by Our Space Staff **Phil Space**

AN enormous asteroid last night hurtled on to the front page of the world's newspapers creating a tidal wave of relief amongst global newsmen.

"We were getting very frightened that our world would end since we didn't have any stories," said stargazer Charles "Patrick" Moore. "But then I was just watching the Sky TV at Night when I noticed this huge asteroid story coming towards me."

"It was so big even I could not miss it. First there was just space and then suddenly an enormous lump of matter crashed into the front page measuring 10 inches across 4 columns."

Scientists predicted that the asteroid story will have incredible side effects including:

- **The blocking out of all other important stories, eg Kate Winslet's new boyfriend.**
- **Vast quantities of graphics flooding the world's papers.**
- **The Sun exploding.**
- **Alan Coren taking a sideways look at what might happen when the asteroid hits Cricklewood.**

Spart

Jockstrap

Slagg

Thribb

Eye Team Win Top Awards

Eye journalists last night walked away with all the top prizes at the prestigious Autocar and Grocer 1998 Press Awards, staged at the glittering Ramada Hotel, Neasden.

Dave Spart
Columnist of the Year

"Always readable, intensely controversial, a true voice of the Nineties."

Sally Jockstrap
Sports Writer of the Year

"Her incisive coverage of the Test Match football scene makes her a nonpareil."

Glenda Slagg
Female Columnist of the Year

"Nothing could be said about Glenda that has not been said before. She is the guv'nor."

E.J. Thribb
W.D. Snoddy Lifetime Achievement Award

"He has stamped his personality on our time like no other. A world without Thribb would be empty indeed."

Private Eye was also named Fortnightly Satirical Magazine (Costing £1) of the Year, 1998.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam: Lines on the Death of The Man Who Was In *High Noon*

So. Farewell then
Lloyd Bridges.
The placards said
HOLLYWOOD MAN DEAD.

But when I bought the paper
To see who
It was,
I did not remember
You.

But Keith's Mum
Did.
Vaguely.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

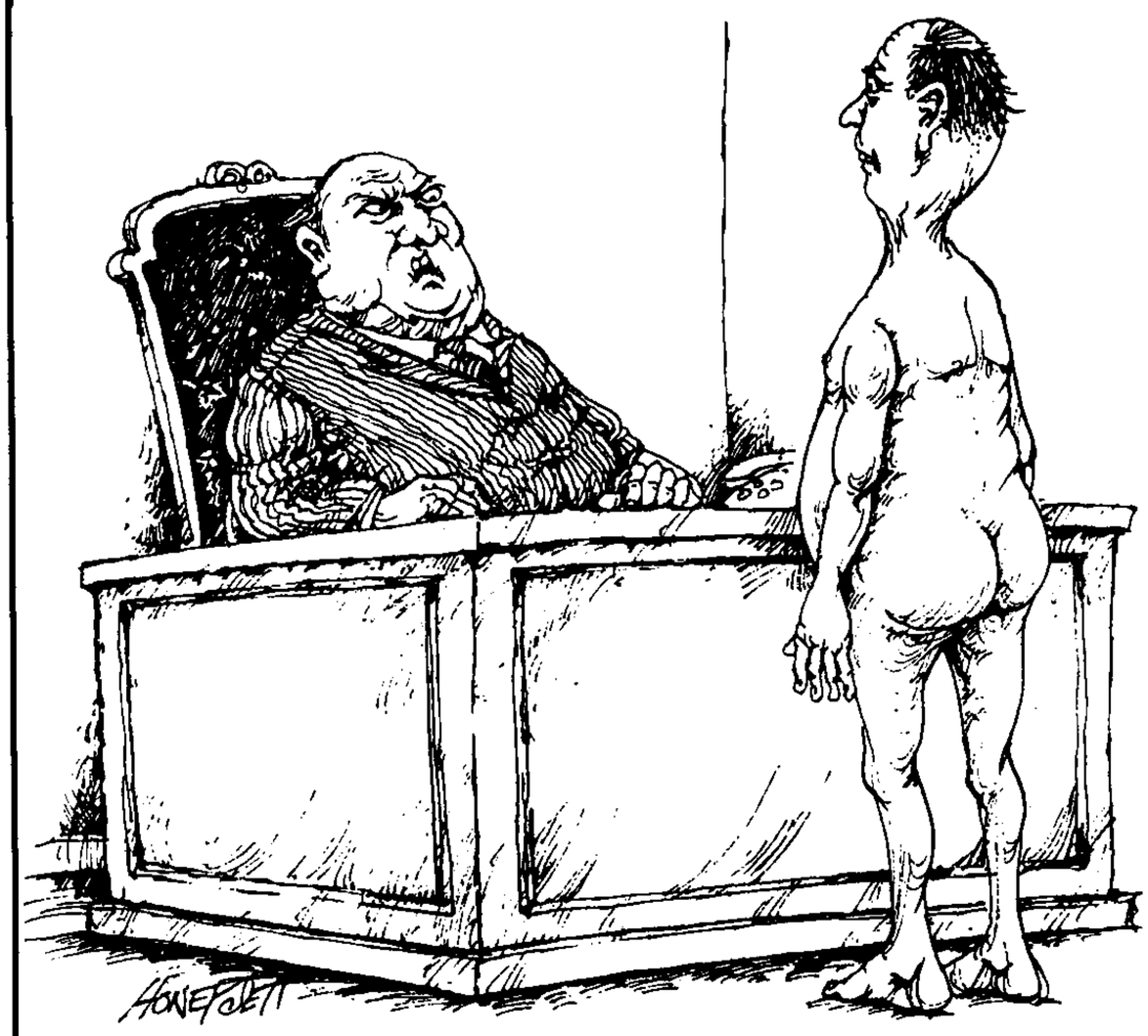
E.J. Thribb is to be paid £300 million by Virgin Trains to write an advertisement in verse extolling the delights of rail travel.

So. Farewell then
£79.50.

That is the price
Of a return
To Cheadle Hulme
From Manchester
(Piccadilly).

Farewell also. The 9.37
Virgin Express
Which Has Been Cancelled
Due to
Signalling problems
In the Leighton Buzzard area
Apparently.

Eric Lachlan Thribb (17½)



"And anyway you're only allowed to dress casually on Fridays"

LEGAL QUERIES

The New Compensation Scheme

From Mrs Ethel Prunehat:

Since seeing Lord Irvine of Lairgover on the television, I have been diagnosed as suffering from traumatic stress. Who do I write to, to claim my £5 million in compensation?

Old Bore writes: Thanks to the Law Commission's new scheme, you can pick up a claim form from your local Benefits Office and return it with a doctor's certificate to the Lord Chancellor's Department. Compensation will be given to you immediately.

From Mr Nigel Prunehat:

When my mother was traumatised by seeing Lord Lairgover on the television, I was unfortunately out of the room making tea. I immediately became traumatised at the thought of not being able to claim compensation for being traumatised. Can I claim compensation for not being allowed to claim compensation?

Old Bore writes: Indeedy-doody. Just follow the procedure explained above, and hey presto, you're almost as rich as Lord Lairg himself!

From Mr Reginald Prunehat:

My wife and son have suddenly become millionaires, meanwhile I am landed with a huge tax bill. Can I claim compensation for the trauma of having to pay for everyone else's compensation?

Let's Parler Franglais

No. 94: The Official Inquiry Into The Death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Juge Coqauvln *(pour c'est lui)*: Ah, Monsieur Fayed, qu'est-ce-que-c'est, cette garbage about une conspiracie, avec regard to le white Fiat, Mossad et MI5?

Fayed: Fug-moi! C'est vrai, what I said, vous fuggin' idiot Français.

Juge: Où est le proof de votre pack of lies, s'il vous plaît?

Fayed: Je suis le fuggin' boss de Harrods, le plus fameux department-store du monde, où on peut snap up beaucoup de bargains. Pour example, dans le Departement de Piano, au second floor, nous avons un Steinway Taiwanese pour seulement £5,000. Et aussi, un emerald tiara magnifique, le property de Monsieur Tiny Rowland ...

Juge: Tais-toi, buffoon Egyptien. Où est le proof?

Fayed: Vous voulez fuggin' proof? Je vous donnerai fuggin' proof. C'est tous dans le nouvel edition du Punch, seulement £1.

Juge: Monsieur le gendarme, arrestez cet homme. Il n'a pas de passport Anglais.

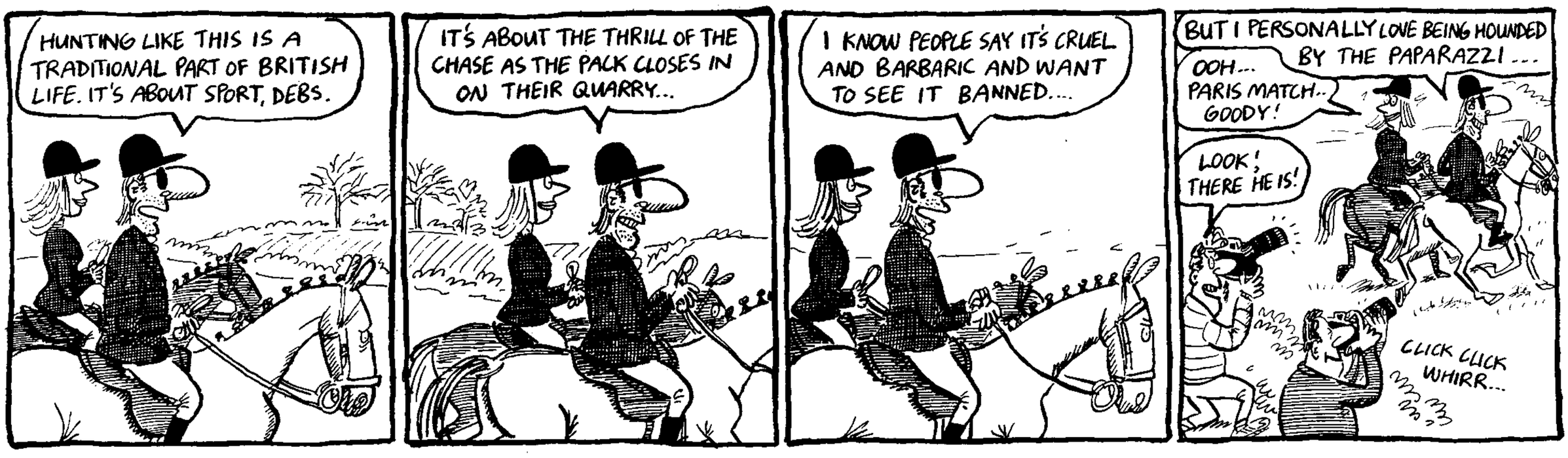
(Les flics drag the accused Mr Fayed au cells)

Fayed: Attendez un fuggin' moment, vous fuggin' judge. J'ai ici un envelope brun, avec votre nom on it.

© 100-Miles-an-Hour Kington

Celeb

LIGGER

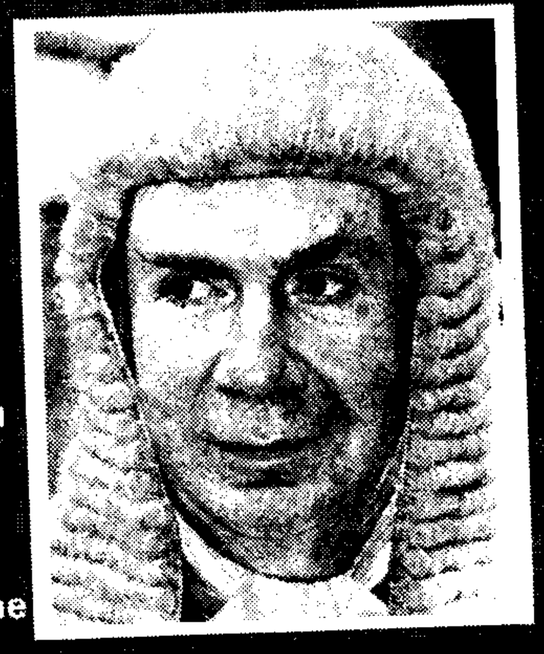

HUNTING LIKE THIS IS A TRADITIONAL PART OF BRITISH LIFE. IT'S ABOUT SPORT, DEBS.
IT'S ABOUT THE THRILL OF THE CHASE AS THE PACK CLOSES IN ON THEIR QUARRY..
I KNOW PEOPLE SAY IT'S CRUEL AND BARBARIC AND WANT TO SEE IT BANNED....
BUT I PERSONALLY LOVE BEING HOUNDED BY THE PAPARAZZI...
OOH... PARIS MATCH.. GOODY!
LOOK! THERE HE IS!
CLICK CLICK WHIRR...

Yes! It's Britain's

BLAIRZONE

Newest Fanzine

Tone says "Lighten up! Everyone has been givin' me grief over Blairzone's Bad Boy, Derry Irvine, and his Rock 'n' Roll lifestyle. Hey, Rock 'n' Roll *is* Excess. Remember the legendary Keith Who of the Moon? He drove a Rolls Royce into a swimming pool! Mick Stone of the Jaggers bought a French chateau and trashed it! My friends the Gallaghers got drunk on an aeroplane and abused the stewardess! Cool! So what's wrong with my old mucker Derry splashin' out on £600,000 worth of Pugin wallpaper!" Nothing that's what's wrong! So can it! Hang loose and hang wallpaper!"



Trax [redacted]

What screamin' Lord Irvine is chillin' out to in his crazee immaculately recreated neo-gothic apartments:

- *INXS by Puginxs*
- ***Perfect Toilet by Loo Reed***
- *D.I.Y.N.O.W.A.Y. by Derry Parton*
- ***Wonderwallpaper (cover version) by Mike Flowerypattern***

What he won't let the decorators play on the tranny:

- *Let it B&Q — The B&Q-tles*

Advertisement

Hanratty, Baby Eappen, Yves Montand — yes, more and more people are being exhumed to make some point or other. If you would like someone dug up, then give us a ring. It doesn't matter how long you've left it — it's never too late to disinter.

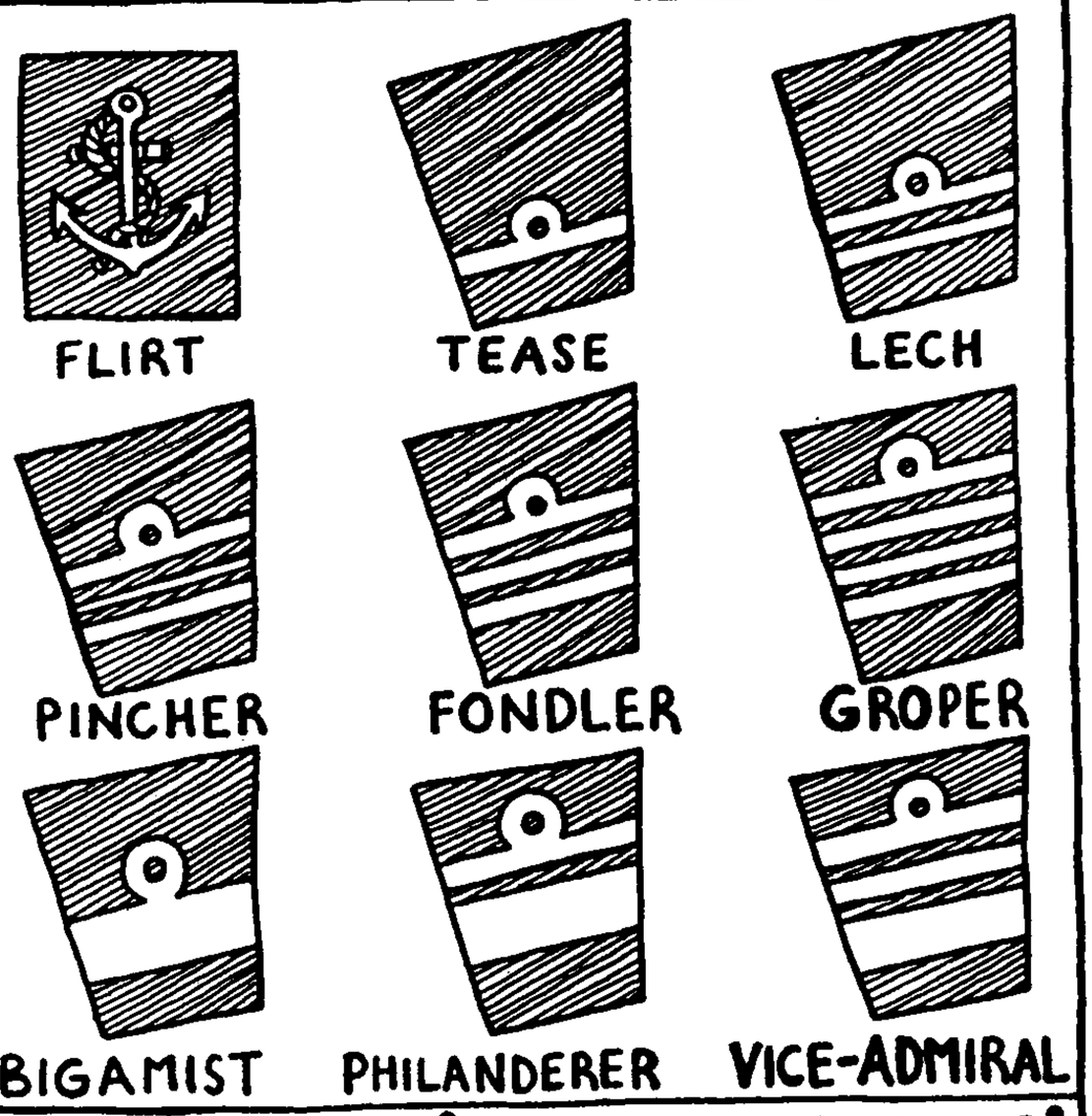
Just contact

Burke and Hare

Edinburgh—London—Boston—Paris

Apparently... BY MIKE BARFIELD

NAVAL RANKS: A TABLOID READERS' GUIDE



NB: NOT SHOWN, 'CHIEF PETTING OFFICER'

'FAMILY FROM HELL' RUIN LUXURY HOME

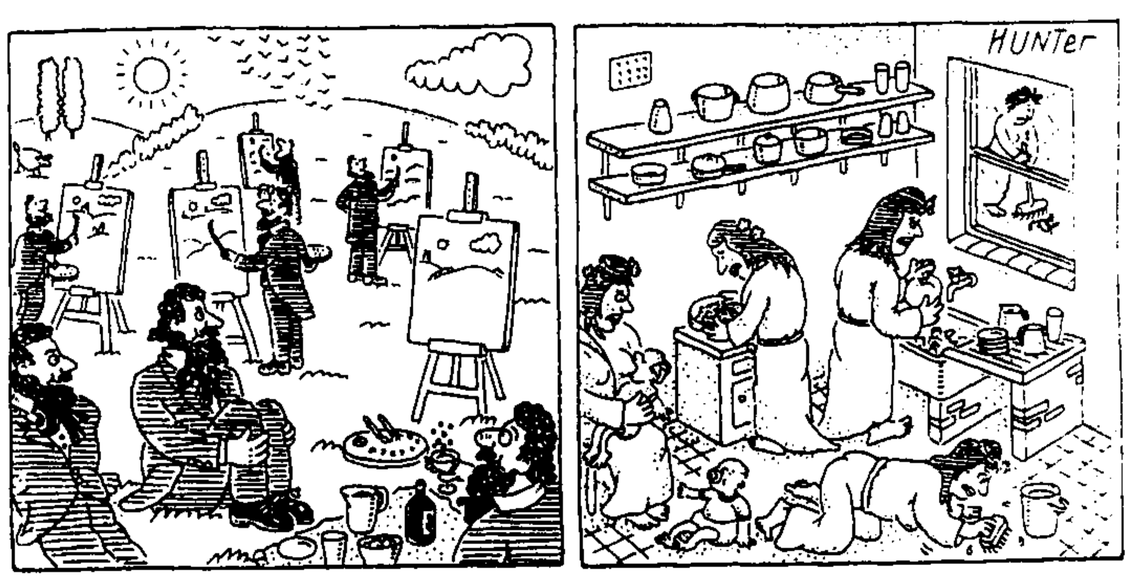
by Our Housing Correspondent, **Benny Fitz-Claimant**

NEIGHBOURS of the notorious so-called "Family From Hell" were fuming today as the true extent of their vandalism was revealed.

Their luxurious residence, in a highly sought-after area of St James's Park, London, was alleged by worried visitors to have become a "human pigsty", with lumps of collapsing plasterwork strewn about the floor.

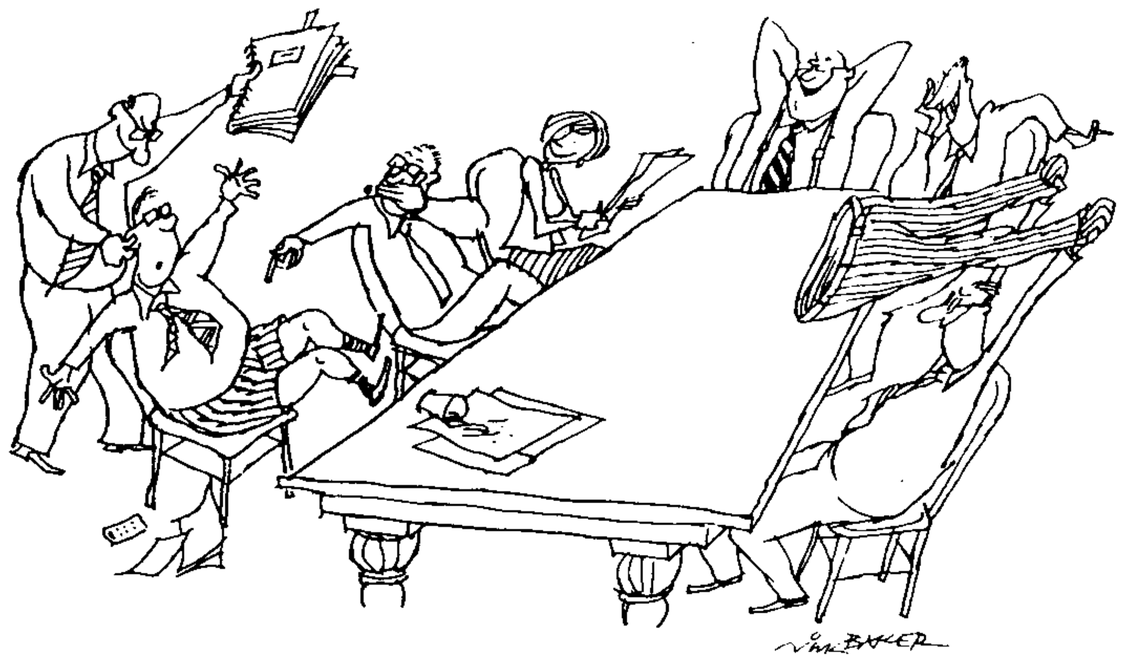
The Windsor family, who neighbours claim "have never held down a proper job", continue to live a life of idle luxury funded purely by state handouts. They are described by social workers as "extremely dysfunctional", with a history of failed relationships, parental bullying, adultery and alcohol abuse. Their previous property was gutted by fire four years ago under extremely suspicious circumstances.

"They think they can do exactly as they please," complained furious taxpayers. "Unfortunately they appear to be right." The outrageous and disrespectful behaviour of the Windsors (thought to be of foreign origin) includes letting their children and dogs run amok, playing the National Anthem at all hours of the day and night *(cont p. 94)*



PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD

PRE-RAPHAELITE SISTERHOOD



"Come on, let's have your report on bullying in the workplace, Fatty"

COMPLETE FLOP WAS OUR IDEA CLAIM TORIES

by Our Millennium Staff
Alec Hugless-Dome

FURY erupted in the House of Commons last night when Tory spokesmen tried to claim credit for the world's silliest idea, the Baby Dome.

Last week Mr Peter Mandelson unveiled the plans for the £2 billion Baby Dome, claiming to the world's media that it was "all my own idea".

He said, "The concept of a miniature huge waste of money being erected right next to the giant huge waste of money came to me in the jacuzzi."

Jaccuzi Straw

But last night Tory shadow spokesman Mr Francis Mudd shocked MPs by revealing that the idea for the miniature huge waste of money had in fact been thought up by Mr Michael Heseltine in his own much larger jacuzzi as long ago as 1992.

"If anyone deserves the credit for this incredibly silly and pointless white elephant, it is us," said Fraud.

Mr Peter Mandelson is 23.

IS BLAIR PLANNING SECRET CONVERSION TO TORYISM?

by Our Religious Affairs Correspondent
Father Ted Heath

THE WORLD will be shocked to learn that the Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair has recently been making secret visits to Conservative Central Office to find out what to do next.

Only last week he was spotted purchasing a number of tracts, including "The Way Forward For The Welfare State" by Father Peter Lilley, "How To Privatise The Armed Forces" by Monsignor Redwood, and "Let's Hang All The Scroungers" by Dom Miguel di Portillo S.J.

Ad Major Dei Gloriam

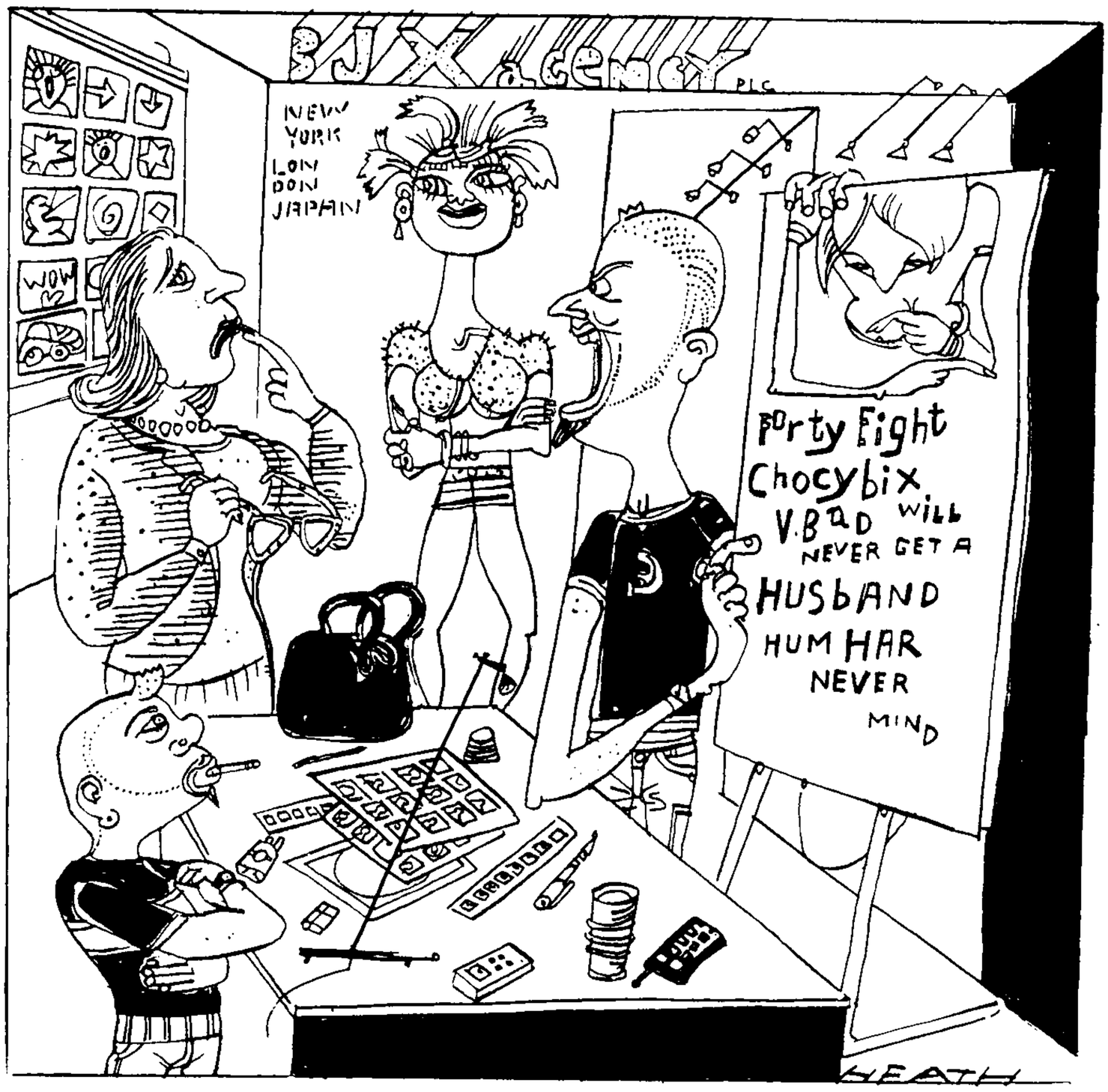
Blair has also been seen worshipping at the shrine of Our Lady of Thatcher in Chester Square, where he was observed kneeling at the feet of the Blessed Virago Margaret.

This blatant act of Maggiolatry has so shocked extreme members of Blair's congregation that some of them have denounced him as "a crypto-Right Footer who will lead this country into the arms of the Treaty of Rome".

But last night a Downing Street spokesman denied that the Prime Minister was about to become a Conservative. "He already is one," he said.

Harry Enfield's **Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath** **32. The Creative Genius**

"When I moved to this agency two months ago I was really excited to be made chief creative for 'Charlie's Choccybix' because I think your product is one of the most superb on the market I know you were happy with your last campaign of the kiddie eating the biscuit and saying 'Charlie's Choccybix – They're Yummy' but I felt we needed something more original this time so what I've done is essentially kept the mood of the last campaign but moved it on slightly by subverting it on its head in a post-modernist pastiche and coming up with a sort of Bridget Jones type idea which involves er Bridget Jones saying 'Forty eight Choccybix V. bad Will never get a husband Hum Har Never Mind' which I think you'll agree is a lot more original You what love ? Yes I know you're the client and I know it's your money we're spending but I don't think we need to say that Choccybix are more chocolatey than ever because that is implied by Bridget Jones eating forty-eight of them listen to me this ad'll sweep the awards What do you mean it's not an original idea? no-one else has done Bridget Jones yet..."



Why I Love China

by William Rees-Mogg

ALL MY life I have loved China. Even when I was at Charterhouse China was my grand passion. I have studied it and made it a field of particular expertise. So when the proprietor rang me to say "William, I want you to write a piece in praise of China," I was only too happy to oblige.

The first piece I ever bought, at a Church fete in Hinton Blewitt in 1923, was a willow-pattern Wedgwood teapot. The lid was missing and there was a small chip in the spout. But apart from that it was exquisite.

(Is this what you wanted, Rupert? It seems a bit odd. I could do another piece on Staffordshire next week, if you like. Gillian has a lovely pair of spaniels on her escritoire.)

On Other Pages

Libby Purves on "Stop Knocking My Boss, Mr Murdoch" . . . 22

Matthew Parris on "I Salute The New Gay China" 22

Editor Peter Stothard on "Why I Can Write Whatever I Want So Long As I Fax It To Rupert First" 23

No Royals In Hospital Shock

BY OUR AWARD-WINNING ROYAL REPORTER OF THE YEAR RICHARD SPECIAL-KAY

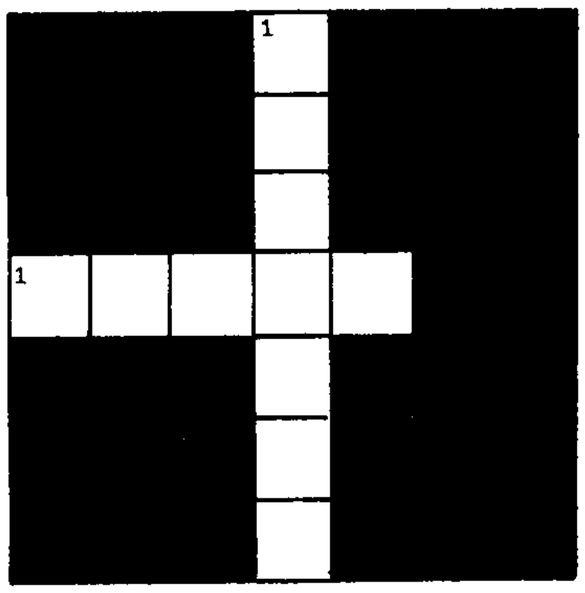
THE NATION today gasped in astonishment when it was revealed that no member of the Royal Family had been in hospital for over 24 hours.

There have been no admissions for knee, hip or circulatory problems affecting any member of the Royal Household since last week.

Said one old-age pensioner: "They have all been very brave, in the way they have handled their lack of illness."

Dr Thos. Stuttaford writes: Damn, I've got nothing to write about. *(Yes, you have, you can do me 500 words on how wonderful the Chinese health service is. P. Stothard, Ed.)*

The New Times Crossword In Full



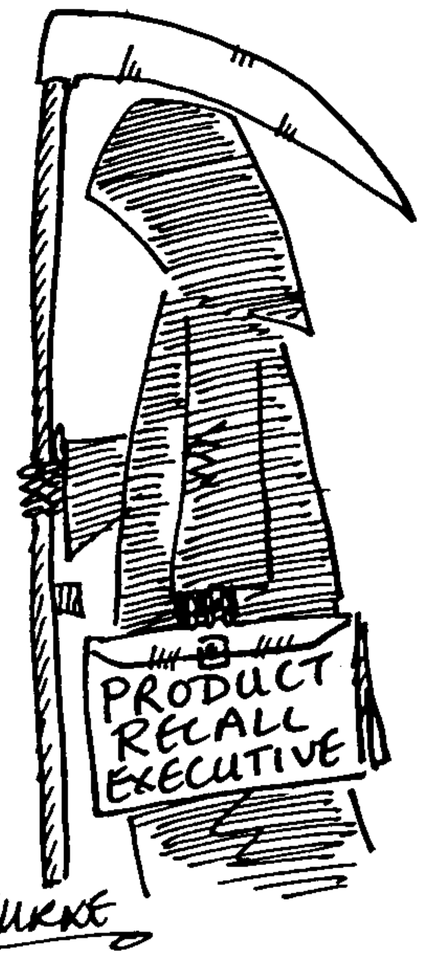
ACROSS

1. The greatest country in the world (5)

DOWN

1. Wonderful people (7)

SOLUTION



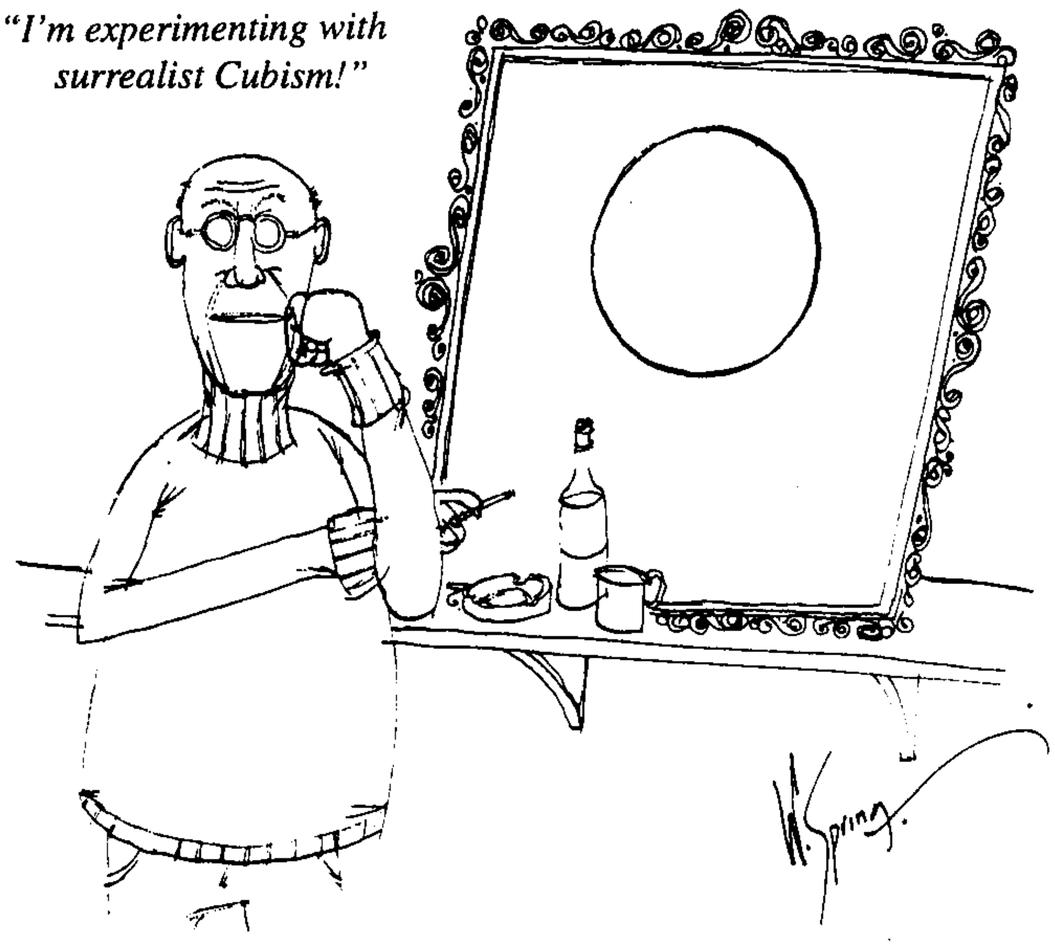
In a survey of 500 judges there was overwhelming support for more training in sexual offences.

The Times

07F Bruno - His Finest Hour (55 mins) £12.95

Video advert, Boxing Monthly

"I'm experimenting with surrealist Cubism!"



POINTS OF VIEW

Silly Presenter: Hullo. We've had a lot of letters this week about the repeat of *Look In My Drawers*, the 1970s' sitcom about a furniture factory in Nottingham.

Silly Reader: Dear Points of View.It was wonderful to see my favourite sit-com back on the BBC. Well done the BBC for showing it again!Could we see, just once more, please Ann, the hilarious scene where Mr Wilmot glues his trousers to the fork-lift truck? *Mrs Yentob of Shepherds Bush.*

Presenter: My pleasure, Mrs Yentob.

(Clip shows man gluing trousers to forklift truck)

Presenter: Last week saw the launch of the new 39-part "fly on the wall" documentary *Happy Eaters?*, following the lives of three school-leavers as they start their first job in a motorway service cafe. Typical of thousands of letters, all in praise of the programme, was one from Mrs Wyatt of Wood Lane, London.

Reader: Congratulations to the BBC for *Happy Eaters?*, another superb programme from good old Auntie! I shall not be going out on Thursdays ever again, so long as this brilliant series lasts. Can we please see again the unforgettable sequence where Jacqui gives the wrong change to a customer.

Presenter: You certainly can, Mrs Wyatt!

(Clip of girl giving wrong change to customer)

Presenter: Finally, a note of criticism, from a viewer who found something she didn't like!

Reader: Come off it BBC! Why can't you ever surprise us by producing a bad programme and giving us something to complain about? The BBC is fantastic, and so is its wonderful Director-General John Birt. Could you please make my day by showing a picture of him? *Mrs J. Birt, Portland Place.*

Presenter: Anything to oblige, Mrs B! And for what it's worth, I agree with everything you say!

(Still photo of His Holiness the Birt of Birts appears, accompanied by solemn music)

Presenter: If you have any comments on any BBC programmes, make sure they are positive, or they won't get read out!

DIARY

TERRY JONES: Oooh, hello Mrs Runcible Spoon! It's us! We're back! How's Mrs Codliver Oil today, then?!!!

JOHN CLEESE: Ha ha ha! Classic Python! Seriously though, to me our long-awaited reunion represents a unique opportunity to define our role expectations within the parameters of the giving, ie performing mode, and by so doing to liberate some if not all of our non-positive thoughts and actions from their neo-mechanistic group-pressure preordained behavioural syndromes.

ERIC IDLE: I wish our old mate Graham Chapman was back here, maybe reincarnated as an ice-lolly. Then I could stick him up my arse! Whooops! Classic piece of Pythonesque bad taste there! But Graham would've loved it, bless him! Classic!

TERRY JONES: Spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam and spam!!!!!!

ERIC IDLE: Here in LA, I still dine out on that one! Only yesterday, I was talking to Robin Williams — do you know Robin? Lovely guy, incidentally — and he was saying how much he loved all the classic Python stuff — you know, dead parrot, spam, dead parrot, all the classics — and I said, listen, Robin, grab a chair and I'll do one right here! So I ran him through the spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam and more spam routine, and he literally fell about. Robin Williams! Beautiful man.

TERRY JONES: Spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam and spam!!!

MICHAEL PALIN: I think the reason these sketches are so enduring is so that they all have this constant theme, this real unifying philosophy, of wishing to prick the bubble of the pompous, to deflate those who have risen to positions way beyond their talents. Call it thought-provoking, call it irreverent, call it legendary — but what I find totally irresponsible is those critics who just snipe from the sidelines that we are somehow "unfunny" or "over-rated". I mean, how dare they, frankly, how bloody dare they?

TERRY JONES: Oooh! Hello Mrs Cystic Fibrosis! Bad taste joke there! Whoops!

MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

Very Pythonesque!

JOHN CLEESE: Great! But seriously, Mike's got a very good point there. I think people who seek to criticise what I'd modestly describe as the Python legend are in some kind of state of denial. But to the extent that as human beings we are all seeking to self-actualise our innermost realities, this very process of opposition to what is, after all, an established and universally accepted set of beliefs — ie, Python as comic legend — may, in itself, represent a healthy outpouring of potentially destructive negativism, a way of coming to terms with the non-positive impulse.

ERIC IDLE: This parrot is dead! This parrot is no more! This parrot is deceased! Polly, polly, polly! Wake up Polly! It's a genuine classic and hard-hitting anti-bourgeois sketch, and one that, here in LA, I'm often regaling my friends with, poolside. Richard Benjamin — do you know Richie? No? Smashing bloke — only the other day, Richard Benjamin told me he was truly knocked out by the Dead Parrot sketch, and that he hoped we'd be performing it at our classic upcoming Python reunion. Of course, Richard's got the immortal gift of laughter, too, bless him. Lovely pool, too: kidney-shaped, with beautiful mosaic tiling and underground sauna complex. You really should see it. A real beaut.

TERRY JONES: Spametty spam! Spametty spam-spam! And now for something —

JOHN CLEESE: — completely different! Ha ha! Classic! Of course, this time round we won't deliver an exact reworking of the Spam sketch: that would be absurd, and would simply be playing to the nostalgic impulse within us all instead of upfronting our emotional responses to the present day. Instead, I'm going to input six months into rewriting the classic Spam sketch with a team of three or four fellow writers before playing it to Target Groups across the four main marketing units of the world and then our companies will utilise the feedback to create a globally-enhanced version that will access maximum cultural diversity. Initial Litmus Group reports suggest the word "spam" is itself redundant in usage beyond Britain and parts of North America: our early redrafts of the sketch access the phrase "tinned reconstituted meat product" as an acceptable cross-cultural global alternative.

TERRY JONES: Tinned reconstituted meat product, tinned reconstituted meat product, tinned reconstituted meat product, tinned reconstituted meat product and tinned reconstituted meat product!!! Ooh-err, Mrs Lumbago!

MICHAEL PALIN: Delightfully irreverent in the classic Python tradition — and now universal too! And talking of global, you know, when I go round the world to, say, China (great big country, very, very old, full of truly delightful people) or Australia (vast continent with great big open spaces, where the delightful inhabitants speak English — if you can call it that!!!) I always find that the lovely ordinary people have a superbly Pythonesque sense of humour. You only have to mention the words "Dead Parrot" — and they look at you quite differently!

ERIC IDLE: It's certainly a classic! We had Steve Martin — do you know Steve? Lovely man — around the other day, and he was telling me what a terrific influence it was. Hoping to get together with him on a bit of a proj. soon, strictly hush-hush. Have you seen his pool? *Superb*.

TERRY JONES: Oooh! Hello Mrs Stiffy-Corpse! Whoops! Irreverent bad taste! Whoops! Naughty! Naughty! Yes — we're ba-ack! Classic!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

YOU OKAY NAOMI ?
Sniff! Sob! Sniff
Sob!
OH CLAUDIA..... IT'S ALL THE BITCHING AND GOSSIP.....
Sniff
I REALLY MISS IT!
Sob!
I KNOW..... WE DON'T GET TALKED ABOUT ANYMORE!
HONOR FRASER AND STELLA TENNANT IN MODEL STORY

Martin ministers lies to the faithful

Sky One The Movie Channel and other waffle

****

goes in here

LICENSED TO THRILL

FOR TOP QUALITY STAG AND HEN NIGHTS PLUS STRIPAGRAMS AND KISSOGRAMS FOR ALL OCCASIONS!! (MOST AREAS COVERED)

Thames Valley Weekly

Southampton Daily Echo

RACLET Tivoli four frame tent, sleeps four good condition, large loving area double air bed included. £160.

Yorkshire Evening Post

Literary Review

Listing badly

man or mango?
Lucy Ellmann
(Headline Review, £14.99)

MAN or mango?, accurately sub-titled "A Lament" and Ms Ellmann's third assault on the Waterstone's shelves, is not so much a novel as a book of lists.

The 44 elements in sea-water. Valuables handed over to the Nazis as of 30 June 1943. An inventory of someone's flat (this one burns on for a relentless five and a half pages). Working out why the literary editors caper to Lucy Ellmann's quirky and plaintive tune is a tricky one, but, as her novel might recast it, this may have something to do with her:

a) waif-like kookiness;

b) distinguished parentage (the late Richard Ellmann wrote those marvellous biographies of Joyce and Wilde);

c) occasional impression of being one brick short of a chimney;

d) burnished yet busily informal prose style.

Let's go for d) shall we? Now for the book itself. Eloise, its depressed but hugely angry heroine (the anger is mostly directed at men, and no one should be in any doubt about the right answer to her titular question) lives in a remote cottage where she avoids human contact, mourns the world's horrors and writes mad letters to supermarket chains and famous people.

George, her American ex-boyfriend, a creative-writing teaching poet with an ice-hockey fixation, has left his wife and fetched up in London. Each spends a lot of time brooding, occasionally about the other, more often about the hopelessness of things.

The average novel has, of course, many features, but some might include:

a) a plausible plot;

b) well-rounded and believable characters;

c) interaction between the above;

d) themes.

Well, d) comes up trumps again here. Some of them are loss, the regularity with which bad things happen and the uselessness — in fact the inhumanity — of lists. The best bits of man or mango?, in fact, are some raw, emotional passages in which Eloise/Ellmann simply flails at some of the injustices of life and recent world history, from her parents' deaths to the Holocaust, without dissolving into sentiment or triteness.

Back in the plot, Eloise and George end up on the west coast of Ireland, where you just know that something awful is on the cards (a clue — "Appendix C" lists "Worst disasters in the British Isles"). The accompanying text contains poems, drawings, borrowings from the Ant and Bee books, lots of references to other writers (Salman! Ian!), WORDS PRINTED IN CAPITALS and numerous other larky add-ons.

In an age of grey-suited literary conformity, one doesn't want to knock Lucy Ellmann's hankering for experiment, but frankly much of this is slightly tedious and could have been done at half the length. I'd mark it down as:

a) inconsequential;

b) bitty;

c) too clever by half.

Most disappointing of all is the fact that some craven publisher — surely not Ms Ellmann — seems to have cut out the most amusing sentence (a sign-off assurance that the book was written "without a single fucking penny from the Arts Council") at proof stage.

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS

No. 94 An exclusive extract from Mark Amory's **Lord Berners — The Last Eccentric**

...It was at this point that Faringdon, Berners' agreeable country residence near Oxford, reached its zenith as a salon of the Arts. Although Mussolini and Sir Oswald Mosley could not be tempted even by the spectacle of Berners' pigs, each of which had a specially commissioned Rex Whistler gouache painted on their sides, weekend guests included Salvador Dali, Winston Churchill, the Duchess of Buck and Cham and her arch social rival the Duchess of Ham and Bran (it was said, no doubt maliciously, that the former had once accused the latter of having served filet sole mignon without providing fish-knives).

Regrettably no one can remember the role Berners assumed in the ballet Three Blind Mice (sets by Cecil Beaton, choreography by Sir Frederick Ashton) that rounded off the evening's entertainment. Lady Hortensia Whittlebot — not to be confused with her first cousin Dahlia as gossip columnists of the period frequently did — suggests that he was the farmer's wife, while the Hon. Peregrine Mincing has a distinct memory that he appeared as the grandfather clock. In the event the performance was overshadowed by news from the paddock that Berners' long-term homme d'affairs ("and what a mort of meaning that description covers" as Lady Bobo Montgomery-Massingberd feelingly remarked) Jack Pansy, or "Madders" as he was known, had shot three gamekeepers on the grounds that they were "clearly working class".

The outbreak of hostilities in September 1939 (since Munich Berners had insisted that Hitler was "manifestly not a gentleman") threatened to cast a pall over these proceedings, even putting an end to work on his latest musical composition Duet for Leek and Swordfish. Attempting to brighten up the pervading gloom with a sumptuous son-et-lumière (accompanied by a 39-piece orchestra under the direction of Sir Arthur Bliss) Berners was discomfited by the arrival of an ARP warden. "Don't you know there's a war on?" this person informed the host. "Do you mean Evelyn Waugh?" Berners replied, showing a flash of the legendary wit that had so enraptured Gertrude Stein, the Duke of Windsor, Coco Chanel and Earl Ruff-Trade at the previous summer's fête champêtre, "I do not recall his being invited..." *(Thats enough Berners. Ed)*

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■EVERYONE except Rupert Murdoch seems to have done well out of the HarperCollins-Chris Patten-Stuart Proffitt fiasco.

Eddie "McBastard" Bell and his henchmen, Adrians Bourne and Laing, have been publicly endorsed by the Digger, even if through gritted false teeth. Prof Proffitt has been sanctified, if currently jobless in Gaza (Little, Brown is looking keen though.)

His former colleagues are relieved to be shot of him, the least team-person in the history of publishing, and to celebrate they're signing up new books as if there was no yesterday.

Simon Heffalump has returned the cheque to Harpic for his "definitive" biography of Enoch Powell (as if anyone would want another), and for good measure sent an additional £5,000 by way of interest. This is honesty unheard of in publishing history. His agent, George Capel, has meanwhile obtained more loot for him elsewhere, from — yes — her husband, Skinny Cheetham.

Chris Patten, meanwhile, has retained his advance of £125,000 and is to receive the same sum from Claire "The Queen" Alexander at Macmillan. To speed the former Hong Kong governor on his way, the Digger has generously paid him an additional £20,000. There's only one sour note to report. Macmillan would not consider buying the Heffer book on the grounds that Hugo Young told the Queen it was "dull". Ooh dear.

THE THINGS THEY SAY...

"They screwed it up... they chickened out... our people cocked it up."
— Rupert Murdoch, the Times, 4 March 1998.

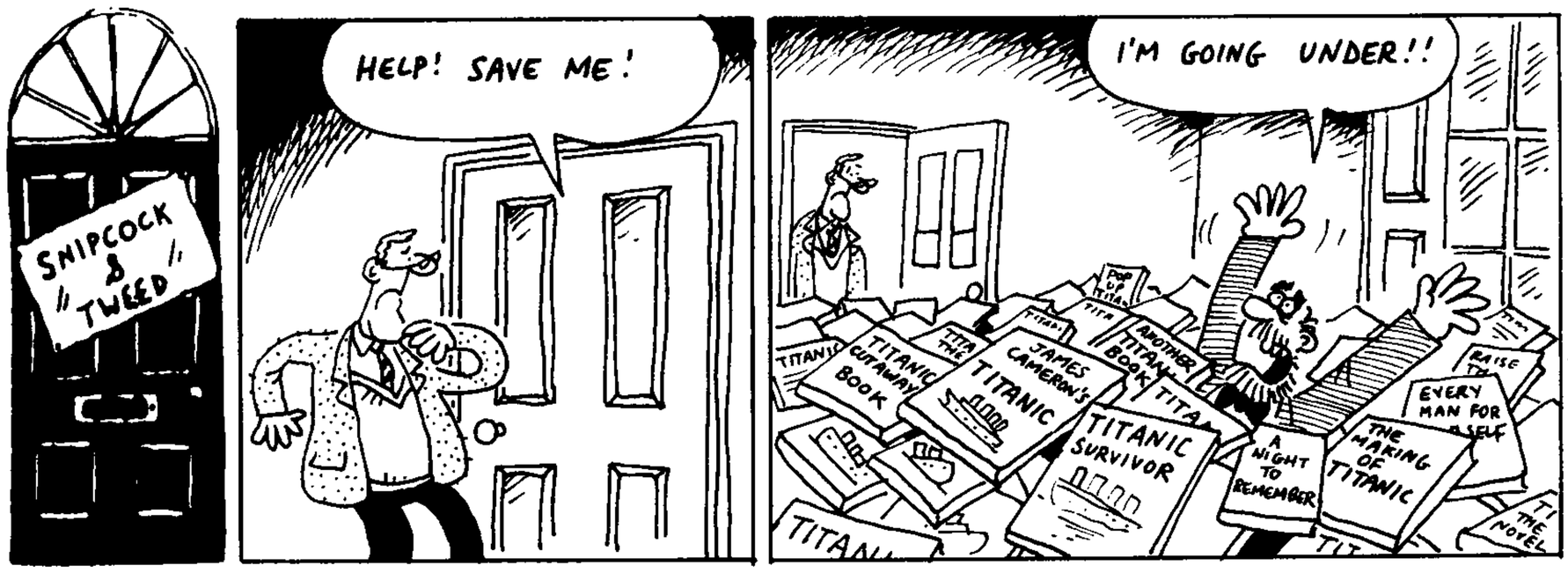
"I have total confidence in the proven talents and abilities of Eddie Bell and the entire publishing team."
— Rupert Murdoch, the Times.

■TOILERS at higherbrow-than-thou publishing house Faber & Faber hoped that some of the profits from the startling success of Ted Hughes's Birthday Letters might filter down through the hierarchy and into their own meagre payslips. Not so. Pay negotiations this year have kicked off with a carefully considered offer by management of, er, 0 percent.

Alas! These grim tidings coincided with an article in the Bookseller revealing that Faber chairman Matthew Evans pocketed a salary rise of 10.7 percent between 1996 and 1997. To forestall mutiny in the ranks, finance director Peter Simpson hastily sent an email to all staff explaining that Evans's true increase was only 3.5 percent. "The figures were taken from the published accounts and include benefits in kind and other items — the two years being compared were prepared on two different bases, so are not comparable. Just in case you were worried!"

They weren't, but they are now: since the only thing in the Bookseller Faber staff read are the jobs pages, none of them had noticed the article until Simpson helpfully drew it to their attention.

'Bookworm'



footnotes

Mystery of the Brecon bombing

EXPLOSIVE!

AT a time when everyone in authority is highly sensitive about terrorist weaponry, there has been very little official fuss about the death of two men from explosives which were stolen from the army.

The explosives were taken from Dering Lines army camp, near Brecon, by an experienced corporal-instructor called Paul Sinclair, who handed them over to his friend Douglas Tindal, a "hard man" bouncer in Brecon and a former army colour sergeant.

Some sticks of the explosive were given to an associate of Tindal's, Paul Horner. Horner and his friend Andrew Cridland were making a bomb in a council house on 1 September last year when they were both blown to pieces. Cridland died instantly and Horner, who suffered terrible injuries, seven days later.

Almost immediately Sinclair and Tindal were arrested and charged. At Merthyr Tydfil crown court last month they pleaded guilty to stealing, receiving and possessing the explosives. The case was rushed through in an afternoon without any publicity outside Wales. Both men were sentenced to seven years.

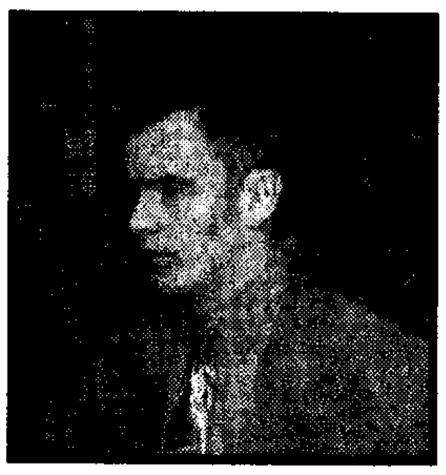
In short statements through their lawyers, the men told bizarre stories. Tindal said he wanted explosives to protect himself and "prove what a man he was" to another bouncer in Brecon. Sinclair said he got the explosives because his friend Tindal wanted them. Judge D. Roderick Evans brusquely rejected both explanations. Repeatedly he asked lawyers to explain how and why the explosives were so easily smuggled out of the camp. He asked prosecution counsel, Ieuan Morris.

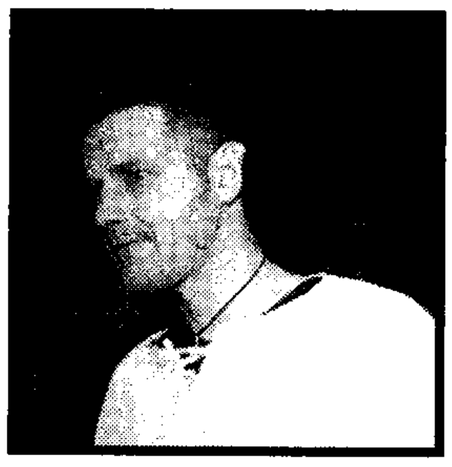
Q: Is there not a system in the army camp to control the number of explosive sticks issued, used and returned?

A: There probably is, but I don't have details.

The judge was intensely irritated by such answers. He denounced both men's stories and complained at the number of questions not answered. "I am certain of one thing," he concluded. "I have not been told the whole truth about the circumstances in which and the purposes for which the explosives left Dering Lines."

An army spokesman told the *Eye* an inquiry board was still investigating the matter. "It is an internal investigation whose findings will not be published. When it is over, however, the minister will write to the local MP with his findings. We are only aware of a theft of one lot of explosives, but if anyone has evidence of any other they should report it to the local authorities."





ARMY THIEVES: *Corporal Paul Sinclair, above , and ex-Colour Sergeant Douglas*

What about the Dyfed-Powys police? At first they indignantly denied firm allegations from two Brecon men on a recent edition of the HTV programme *Wales This Week* that some months before the explosion they had told the police that Tindal was harbouring explosives. The *Eye* can reveal that these denials have now been questioned by two more witnesses. One of them, a policeman, confirms he was told that Douglas Tindal was carrying explosives round the town since last May, and that the police knew about it. A police inquiry has been set up to try to unravel this mystery.

During all these denials and assurances from high places, no one has provided even half a credible answer to the question: why were Paul Horner and Andrew Cridland making a bomb on 1 September?

Shortly before the explosion, Horner told his girlfriend that he and Cridland would be leaving the country for a long time. One explanation is that the couple were part of a plot to kill Paul Burgess, a wealthy local businessman. Early last year, Burgess complained to the police that his life had been threatened, and a special alarm was fitted to his house. He told *Wales This Week* that he lives in permanent fear of an attack. Yet if killing Burgess for a reward was the motive, why use explosives which neither of the dead men knew anything about? The police seem curiously reluctant to follow up this line of inquiry.

A more lurid explanation links the bomb to the referendum campaign on Welsh devolution which was in full swing last September. A bomb "outrage" during the campaign, it is suggested, could have been blamed on paramilitary Welsh nationalists to the advantage of the "no" campaign. Such a motive could explain the blind eye turned by the authorities to the stealing of the explosives and their availability in Brecon. Horner and Cridland, neither of whom were connected to the army, were eminently "deniable" if anything went wrong. Such conspiracy theories will continue to abound as long as army, police and government continue their official silence about how the weapons became available.

Many people in the Brecon area believe that a steady stream of explosives has been leaking out of the camp for some time. They point to the "mini-arsenal" of illegally-procured explosives and weapons which was found in Corporal Sinclair's locker and room when he was arrested.

Barbara Horner, Paul's mother, has continued to complain about what she says has been a blatant cover-up. She tells the *Eye*: "I want to know the truth about my son's death. Why were these explosives sent out of the camp? Why were they hanging around for so long? Why was my son involved at all? Was Tindal a police informer? The more I ask the people who should know, the more problems I get."

On 12 February Mrs Horner got a telephone call from a man who told her: "If you continue your press inquiries you'll be dead — there will be no more phone calls but it will be when you least expect it." The day she appeared on *Wales This Week*, Mrs Horner, who has been a nurse all her life and has never been arrested or convicted of anything, was visited by Dyfed-Powys police and asked if she had spoken to HTV. On 10 March the police came to her house again, said they were following up complaints from her son's estranged wife and took away her television sets and videos, one of which she has had in her house for 15 years. She tells the *Eye* nothing will stop her asking questions: except the answers.

Number £19 million crunching

■ cost to the NHS of the Read computer coding system

■ projected savings from the Read system, provided it is in use for the next 100 years

● *For the full story of the Read farce see Footnotes — Eye 916, 24 January 1997*

COUNTER PAIN: 4

■ THE post office will not publish the charges or details of its investigation into senior management following various recent "franchising" (privatisation) scandals. So what has happened to the managers involved?

The regional general manager Bert Bertolini has been removed from his job though he is still employed by the post office. Harvey Skipsey, head of the retail network, has been transferred to the north-east. Katie Howell, the franchise manager's assistant, resigned during the investigation and her boss Richard Sidlin has been dismissed. Only Tom Pegler, retail network manager, keeps his old job.

The changes in top management don't seem to have made much difference. Since the election, pending a review, the government has banned the franchising of any more post offices. Frustrated from indulging its obsession with franchising, the new Post Office Counters management has come up with a brilliant alternative: closure. The popular post office at Theobalds Road, Holborn, is to close this month. The management blame the landlords, Land Securities, who plan to refurbish the building.

In touching concern for her staff, Jackie Ilesley, the new head of retail network, says that "to offer post office services while the building is undergoing major demolition works is not an acceptable environment". But no complaint has been made by any post officer workers at Theobalds Road, and Land Securities would be bound by law to offer the refurbished shop to the post office if it wanted it.

Why not move into temporary rented premises until the building work is done and then go back? Why lose London yet another crown post office? The answer may be rather familiar. Land Securities has promised the post office £96,000 if it closes down and clears out without conditions or fuss.

EXCLUSIVE!

STUDENTS of "exclusives" in the British press should study carefully these three headlines.

The first is from the front page of the *Herald*, a west of Scotland morning paper, on 27 November last year. HANRATTY WAS INNOCENT: DNA TESTS PROVE THAT THE WRONG MAN WAS HANGED — EXCLUSIVE by John Linklater.

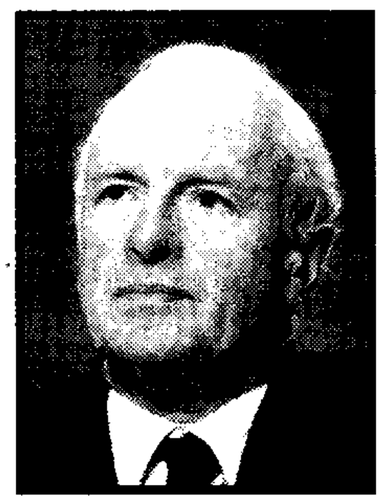
Move on now to 11 January and two pages of the newspaper with the biggest circulation in the country: NEWS OF THE WORLD INVESTIGATES FINAL PROOF THAT THE WRONG MAN WAS HANGED FOR THE A6 KILLING. HANRATTY INNOCENT. NEW DNA TEST CLEARS HIS NAME 36 YEARS AFTER HE WENT TO GALLOWS — by Sara Gaines.

Now, the *Daily Mail* on 11 March: HANRATTY DNA SHOCK — WAS HE GUILTY AFTER ALL? EXCLUSIVE by Peter Rose, crime correspondent. The three stories could not all be right. In fact, they were all wrong.

The facts are as follows. In 1994 a new dossier on the A6 murder case was handed to the home office by the Hanratty family's lawyer Geoffrey Bindman. It was passed on to Scotland Yard and to Chief Supt Roger Matthews. After a long investigation he concluded that James Hanratty was innocent of the murder, and early in 1996 recommended that the case be reopened.

Terrified of such a decision, the brave home secretary Michael Howard fudged and dodged for more than a year before passing the case on to the newly-formed criminal cases review commission (CCRC). It was given top priority and handed to Baden Skitt, a former chief of Scotland Yard's CID and later chief constable of Hertfordshire. After a thorough survey of a mass of evidence which never reached Hanratty's trial at Bedford, Skitt came to exactly the same conclusion as had Matthews.

The evidence of vital crown witnesses was demolished by his inquiries, and there was very little left of the original prosecution case. Before he recommended to his fellow commissioners that he send the case back to the court of appeal, however, he decided to have another shot at DNA tests on the tiny samples of DNA still left on the underwear worn by Valerie Storie, who was shot, raped and crippled for life by the A6 murderer, and on a handkerchief in which the murder gun was wrapped when it was left under the back seat of a London bus.



WHAT A DICK: Taverne

Michael Hanratty, James's brother, agreed to give a swab for this purpose and it quickly emerged that no direct comparison could be made between the swab and the underwear. The *Daily Mail* story in this respect was wrong. But there was some possibility of a partial match between the swab and the handkerchief. So the *Herald* and the *News of the World* were wrong too. The tests continue.

As a follow-up to its "scoop" the *Daily Mail* published on 12 March a double-feature on James Hanratty under the headline "Was He Guilty?" The article under "Yes" was written by Lord Taverne, who as home office minister in the 1964-70 Labour government refused to reopen the case.

Taverne made three main points. One was borrowed from a 1963 book by Louis Blom-Cooper. A prison officer alleged that Hanratty told him the killer had come across the murdered couple in a field. "It had not," says Taverne, "been made public that the ordeal of the murdered couple began in a field." So only the killer could have known about it. Devastating, if true; but as Blom-Cooper has since gracefully conceded, absolute nonsense. Pretty well every newspaper in the land had reported again and again that the ordeal had started in a cornfield.

Another bull point by Taverne was that "the details given by the killer about his past borstal and prison record fitted only three people — one was dead, one was in prison and the third was Hanratty". Devastating, if true; but completely *un*true. Many of the details given by the killer about his record did not fit Hanratty at all. The killer said among many other things that he had "done the lot". This was conveniently translated by the prosecution to mean "completed a full prison term without remission", as Hanratty and only a few others had done. But the words "done the lot" could have meant, and were certainly taken by Valerie Storie to mean simply what they said: that he had "done everything". Thirdly, Taverne reports that the 1974 Hawser report into the case "was never published". Oh dear. It *was* published — by the government. Readers interested in the *Eye*'s assessment of the report at the time should look up a piece on page 18 of no.196 entitled HUNG DRAWN AND HAWSERED.

OFSTED: The Miskin Link

HIGH STANDARDS: Chris Woodhead

■ OFSTED, the government's education standards office, reports "huge sales" of its two videos *Early Years in Literacy* and *Early Years in Numeracy*.

The literacy tape features Ruth Miskin, headmistress of Kobi Nazrul school in London's Tower Hamlets, whose teachers and teaching are widely puffed in it. Nowhere does the video mention that Ruth Miskin lives with Chris Woodhead, Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools and head of Ofsted.

Should this connection have been declared? "No," replied an Ofsted spokesman. "It's not relevant or necessary to make that clear. This is a video for teachers about good teaching in literacy. Provided the teachers' school is doing a good job and their quality of teaching and the way they go about teaching is good and fits in with the government scheme — then that is what matters."

The spokesman emphasised that neither Ruth Miskin nor her school were paid for their part in the video, and that all profits went to the treasury. The *Eye* asked if, in view of the substantial promotion and publicity afforded to her school through the video, it would have been more appropriate to choose a school where the chief inspector's girlfriend was not the head. The spokesman replied: "The school was chosen by our primary team as one that works with children who come from families where English is not the first language. It was useful to have a London school. It was a school we knew about. I mean obviously we knew about it. "

High Principals

APU: A PROFESSOR UPTIGHT

■ TERRIBLE retribution has been wreaked on the *Times Higher Education Supplement* for daring to report some of the recent controversies at Anglia Polytechnic University.

A letter from Hill & Abbott, Chelmsford solicitors, demands an apology and damages to compensate for allegations against Prof Huw Jenkins, head of the university's business school. (See *Eyes* 942, 943, 945). A private letter from Mr Jenkins's son Jonathan, a lecturer at his father's business school, is very critical. And the secretary of the university, Mr Stephen Bennett, demands an apology or else, he says, he'll take the *THES* to the Press Complaints Commission. Curiously, no apology has appeared.

Meanwhile Mr John Watts, head of management development at the business school, who made a number of formal complaints about its administration, has been suspended while the people he complained about are still at work.

PS: Father and son Jenkins are by no means the only members of the same family working at the university. Mr Stephen Bennett's wife Nicki, for instance, is the university librarian.

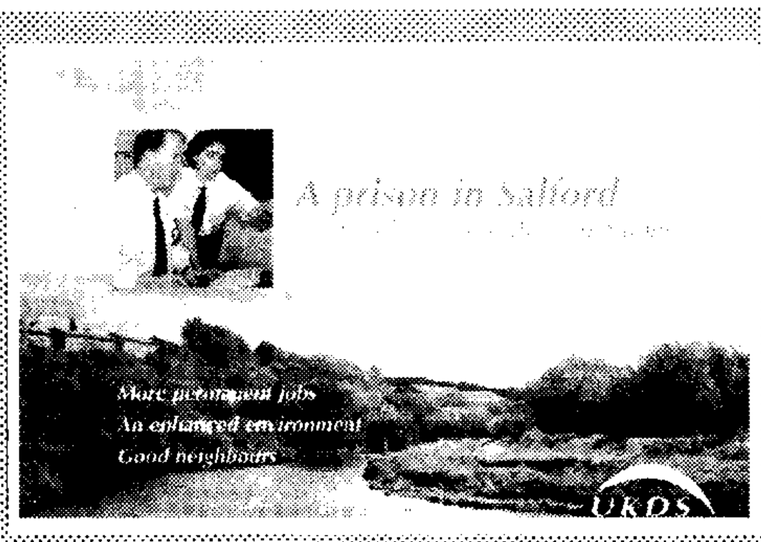
SCARBOROUGH FAYRE

■ AN *EYE* correspondent at University College, Scarborough, was very disappointed when she went to see college performers in a new and widely advertised play called *Newton's Cat*.

She describes it as "a pompous piece of drivel", and was specially cross when she discovered that the advertised author Arthur Roberts was really Robert Arthur Withers, principal and chief executive of the college.

The *Eye* asked Mr Withers how the script came to be chosen for college performance. He replied with two pages of hilarious jokes begging the *Eye* to "publicise my play" and somehow forgetting to answer the question.

■ SEVERAL times in opposition, shadow home secretary Jack Straw voiced his distaste for prison privatisation. Moreover, Labour's manifesto commitment "to take proper ministerial responsibility for the prison service" was widely taken as a pledge to stop privatisation. Here is the result: a tasteful advertisement for a new prison on the site of the old coal-fired Agecroft power station at Salford. UKDS is a private company owned by the Corrections Corporation of America.



In the City

SUGGESTIONS that Mohamed Fayed will sell Harrods and quit Britain if he does not get his longed for British passport should encourage would-be bidders to start forming an orderly queue in Knightsbridge. The chances of the phony pharaoh ever becoming a British citizen are on a par with those of his employee Henri Paul passing a breathalyser that fateful night in Paris.

But that is not the only reason Fayed — despite maintaining that he will never sell — may not be averse to a deal to unload all or part of his empire, as he was two years ago with the abortive Wall Street flotation. Both Harrods and the Paris Ritz have accumulated mounting bank debt which will need to be repaid or refinanced within the next year (the Ritz) and in four years' (Harrods). Furthermore, Fayed is rapidly wearing out his welcome in Britain, which could raise the spectre of legal or political pressures which could force a sale.

A year ago Harrods Holdings raised a new bank credit line of up to £370m of which it had already drawn more than half. This figure is expected to have grown in the financial year just ended given Fayed's expansion into hotel and property developments, plus his lavish spending habits.

The Harrods cash machine is able to service the cost of such borrowings, but repayment would require asset sales. Which brings us to the Paris Ritz, which is due to repay or refinance an £18m facility next year of which at least £14m had been used a year ago. The hotel has never made a profit but would command a trophy price if sold. A sale would also remove from Fayed the liability for any civil suit brought over the death of the Princess of Wales once the French magistrate has determined it was the undisputable fault of the drunken, speeding Paul — a Ritz employee.

If a Wall Street sale for Harrods was not feasible when only the Department of Timidity & Inaction was besmirching Fayed's reputation, the position now is much worse. And with a flotation ruled out, selling parts or all of the Harrods group or the Ritz may be one way of handling the Fayed bank loans.

It may also be the case that Fayed may wish to jump before he is pushed. Fayed's crown jewels are worth much more if he is a willing seller than if he is forced to sell. Which brings us back to the passport issue and the Scotland Yard investigation into what happened to the contents of two Harrods safe deposit boxes.

Even before he effectively accused the government, through MI6, of assassinating Princess Diana, the odds against Fayed becoming a British citizen were lengthening, despite the announcement that home secretary Jack Straw would review his rejected application. This was seen by some as merely a device to avoid an embarrassing court ruling over the home office policy of refusing to give reasons for rejection. Now reasons will be given — which may not be good news for Fayed.

Fayed has no markers on the Labour government, unlike those he had on the Tories (and even they turned him down). Furthermore, there were already two strong reasons for declaring Fayed unfit to have British citizenship. He was branded a liar and cheat by the DTI's report into his 1985 takeover of Harrods; and he is by his own admission a briber of MPs — something which but for a legal loophole could have found Fayed in the dock with the lovely Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith. As Jack Straw is pressing for what could be called the "Fayed law", making the corruption of MPs illegal, it seems somewhat unlikely the same Straw would, before doing so, reward the man who made the law necessary.

But that has been made even more unlikely as a consequence of Fayed's arrest earlier this month following the Scotland Yard investigation into the allegations of theft from Harrods safe deposit boxes belonging to his rival "Tiny" Rowland and an elderly London woman. Fayed was released on police bail without being charged, but the fact that he was called in and fingerprinted suggests the chances of charges of theft are far from remote. Criminal damage seems a minor criminal matter given that Harrods owned the boxes and the only property damaged were some of Rowland's documents and tapes.

Fayed has already admitted that the Rowland box was broken into while seeking to defend himself against Rowland's civil action. Fayed, however, is seeking to blame any theft — as distinct from copying of documents and tapes belonging to Rowland — on others, in particular Harrods' former security director Bob Loftus, who blew the whistle on what had happened. Rowland claims emeralds worth £200,000 and other valuable items have been stolen. Fayed denies these were in the box. But that could be for a jury to decide.

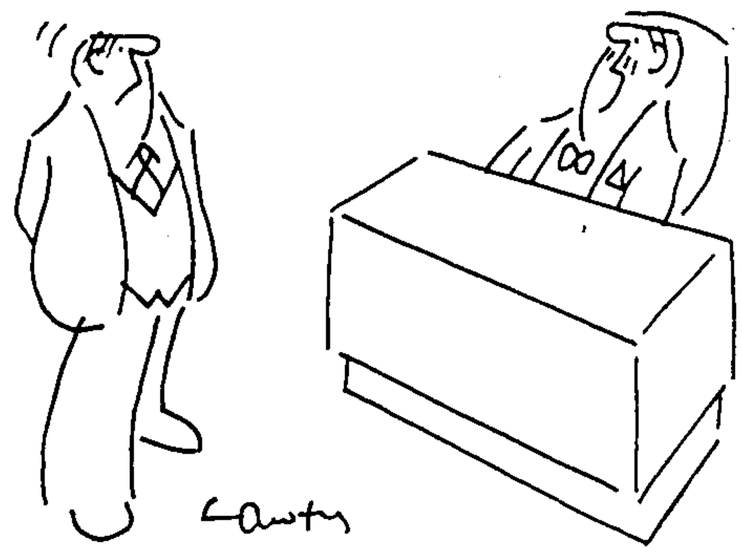
What happened to the contents of the second box is potentially much more serious for Fayed. This is because there is independent evidence that jewellery worth up to £100,000 was in the box when it was opened for non-payment of rent. That jewellery has since disappeared. However, the police have lists of the items. They have also been told the contents were deliberately under-valued. One in-house jewellery expert refused to have anything to do with the valuations. The two outside jewellers who gave valuations have already been interviewed.

But the most dynamite fact of all is that the police have also been told that Fayed allowed his wife — who was not aware of the true position — to choose some of the items claiming they were Harrods' property. Fayed it appears believed the owner was dead and that he was able to help himself. Sadly for him the owner was not dead — and the law does not anyway allow safe deposit box companies to do more than sell the contents at auction and deduct what they are owed. Harrods did not do that. That is what Fayed now has to explain to the police and the crown prosecution service (CPS).

Doubtless Fayed will try to blame his underlings using the Thomas à Beckett defence of over-enthusiasm. But short of his faithful director of dirty tricks John MacNamara (also called in and bailed by his former Yard colleagues) or another acolyte volunteering to take the fall, it does not look good.

Add in the allegations by former Harrods employees of sexual harassment and telephone tapping, and it seems Straw will have no shortage of reasons Fayed should be refused British citizenship — irrespective of whether he is ever charged or convicted over the safe deposit box affair. Which is why some believe the only reason for Fayed's proclaiming via the *Daily Moron* his loony tune belief that Diana and Dodi were the victims of an establishment/government anti-Muslim plot is to get his retribution in first. This way anything that now happens — no passport, criminal charges — will be part of the plotters' revenge for his revealing "the truth"!

If Straw says "no citizenship", the question then might be: if he is unfit to have a British passport, why should Fayed have the right to live here and run British companies?



"You lack initiative and ambition, Higgs, so I'm promoting you to my deputy!"

THE exit of the bouffant Michael Cole after perhaps a lie too far has seen the entrance of Piers Pottinger from Lowe Bell as the new Fayed mouthpiece, thereby creating a remarkable coincidence.

Pottinger's father George, while a senior Scottish office civil servant, was seconded to assist the then owner of Harrods, Hugh, later Lord Fraser, with his Aviemore leisure project in the Highlands. In 1971 "Gorgeous George" wrote a hagiography (*The Winning Counter*) of Fraser and how he won a 1959 takeover battle for Harrods.

However, Pottinger's love of the good life led him to become a willing tool of a great corrupter, architect John Poulson. Both men were jailed in 1974 for corruption.

Now, 24 years later, another Pottinger is assisting — although this time in a legitimate capacity — another man who won a takeover battle for Harrods, who is also a great corrupter and who might yet go to jail. Fayed must hope there is not a Pottinger curse to rival that of the pharaohs'.

WITH the demise of his Harvard Securities bucket shop all a long time ago, Tom Wilmot is once again prowling the AIM and OFEX markets. So what should be more natural than that he should join forces with old partner and fellow dubious share peddlar, Morton Glickman?

The Canadian-based Glickman has a hand in US kerb market-listed "shell" company Peripheral Connections, which Wilmot suggested might bail out satellite car tracker Skynet before it imploded. Unlike most investors, Wilmot was a money maker from Skynet. He has since acquired its assets from the liquidator. What price a new deal to tempt a new shipload of fools?

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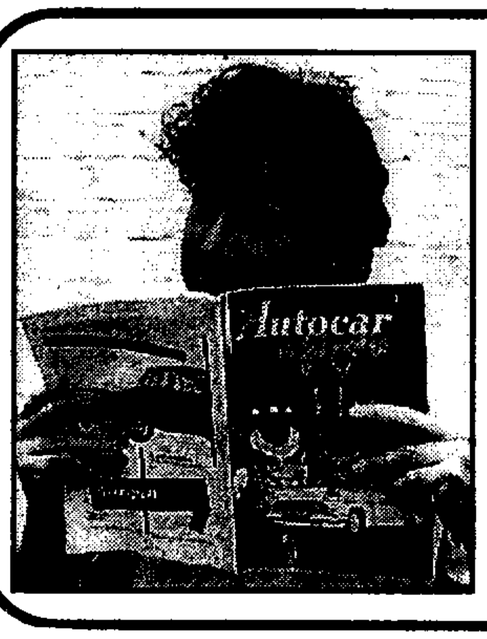

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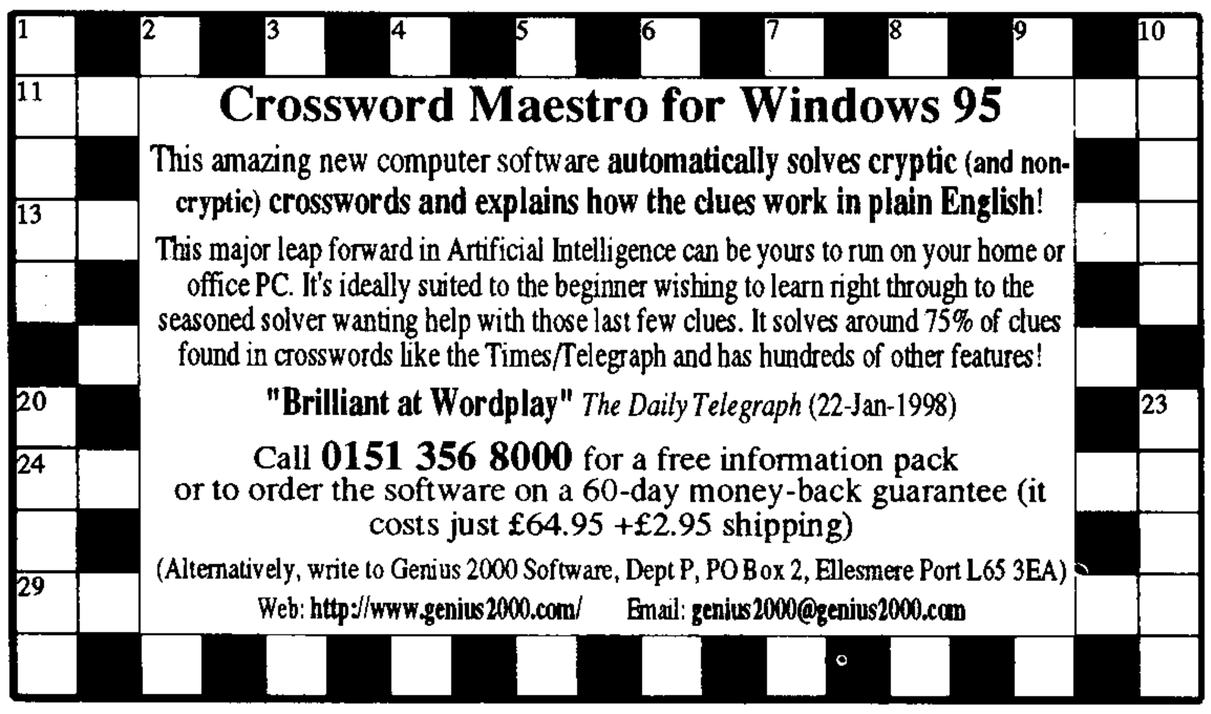

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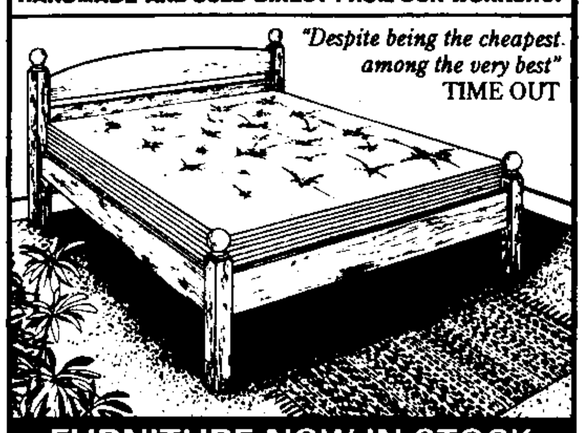

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TANZANIA — £1200 NEEDED for research into environmental degradation and sustainable development. Happy to provide further details: Barclays 20-51-01, 70195626 or Box 0246.

PEACE IN ISRAEL: EZEKIEL 36:23-24. Sincere peace loving jew, needs your help. £5000 needed to emigrate to Israel. Any donation is welcome. MAY THE G-D OF ISRAEL BLESS YOU. Midland 40-30-20 31236385.

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DESPERATE DUE TO redundancy and debt — £8,000. Desperate for peace of mind. Please help. Barclays 20-42-73 40037796. THANKS.

THREE IMPOVERISHED morally uptight students seek funds for postgraduation Greek island f**kfest. Barclays 20-01-09 a/c 40978922.

SINKING FAST — Last hope — genuine. Box 2346.

LADY 28 UNFINISHED education. Help either scholarship or £15,000 for legal qualifications. 30-94-47 1269369 LLOYDS.

PLEASE PLEASE HELP — £2000 needed to save loved one. NATWEST No.02150174.

CASH NEEDED to get separated family together again. Box 0546. THANKS.

PLEASE HELP REJECTED person for marriage 7 times because of paedophile abuse — debts due to hurt, abuse from the age of 7 to the age of 14. Donations to help appreciated: £30K, Barclays 20-92-60, 30996971. I am married to the wrong man the ladies admit if they could show more empathy and understanding the book "MAKING YOUR FAMILY HAPPY" would have made us the right person for each other. Box 2146 if you like the publication.

PROFESSIONAL WOMAN urgently needs funds for treatment of agoraphobia (hypnotherapy) 11-00-70, 00021129.

JEWISH SOLDIER wounded in Lebanon desperately needs funds to re-build life. United Mizrahi, Branch 15, 582345, Israel.

AWARD-WINNING FILMMAKERS seek modest finance for low-budget commercial feature film — 0171 639 5596.

DESPERATE TO ESCAPE please can you help? Nationwide 070030 51474191.

DISABLED YOUNG MAN needs £20,000 plus for new treatment, equipment, re-training. Please help me turn my life around. Anything would help. Lloyds 7106849, 30-94-04.

Chemistry, Architecture Students in Hardship. Housemate did runner. Landlord wants rent or sues. Can repay. Midland 04-09-19 81784714.

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EX-ARMY WOMAN, fed up with the dole needs financial help to start business on small up and coming Caribbean Island. Halifax 11.12.35, 00004828. THANKS. Box 0945.

GULF SAILOR RETURNS — family desperate for holiday together. Please help! Lloyds 1344692.

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WARM, SENSITIVE Prof Male, young sixties, gsoh, s/e London, enjoys arts, talking, walking, good food, wine, comfortably tied to recluse, seeks buxom woman friend/lover for discreet but worthwhile relationship. Box 1346.

6' HANDSOME, educated man, slim 55, seeks slim petite pretty younger woman for love, sailing, adventure. Leicestershire. Photograph essential. Box 1446.

AMUSING, TALL, DARK, FIT and very handsome male, 29, would love to meet funny, sexy and probably older lady for good times. Box 1646.

COMPANY PAYS FOR 27th-30th May luxury caribbean holiday. To join me please just be 22-36, witty and look stunning in a bikini. No other expectations. Photo appreciated. Box 1746.

GRADUATE, 26, seeks Mrs Robinson for education, sensual fun and adventurous times. Box 1846.

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SINGLE CHAP, 34,6'1" tall, slim, seeks mature female between 45-60 for friendship and frolics. A photo ensures reply. London. Box 2846.

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NEGLECTED? Need a secret lover? Charming, attractive married man, late 40s, well educated, seeks discreet lady in similar position with gsoh for mutual appreciation, affection and lustful rendezvous. London/S.East/Leeds. Box 1546.

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MAN, 40s own small business, 5/8", 10 ½ stone — seeks slim bright lady as partner. Yorkshire. Box 2646.

INTELLIGENT ATTRACTIVE man, young, 50, professional, seeks similar woman, 30+. E.Midlands. Photo? Box 2746.

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